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HOUSE BILL 2497

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State of Washington

55th Legislature

1998 Regular Session

By Representatives Alexander, Clements, DeBolt, Regala, Pennington,  
Anderson and Hatfield

Read first time 01/14/98. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to maintaining and rebuilding elk populations in  
2 Washington; and creating new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that: (1) Certain  
5 Washington elk populations are at risk due to habitat changes and to  
6 increased hunting pressures; (2) different cultural perspectives toward  
7 hunting, different tribal and nontribal regulations and enforcement  
8 procedures, and different views regarding treaty hunting rights have  
9 contributed to tensions between tribal and nontribal elk hunters and  
10 between elk hunters and residents of areas where elk are hunted; (3)  
11 while they bring different perspectives to the hunt, tribal and  
12 nontribal elk hunters share a common interest in working to maintain  
13 and rebuild elk populations in order to ensure that there will continue  
14 to be elk hunting opportunities; and (4) a combination of policies and  
15 discussions to cultivate this common interest could yield ways to  
16 reduce the tensions and maintain and rebuild the elk populations.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The department of fish and wildlife  
18 shall:

1 (a) Establish more accurate annual population estimates for  
2 Washington's elk herds, particularly those herds in areas where  
3 conservation restrictions have been imposed in recent history;

4 (b) Determine as accurately as possible annual elk mortality from  
5 all sources, including the number of elk taken by all hunters and by  
6 poachers;

7 (c) Delineate changes in historic elk ranges along with anticipated  
8 habitat changes in the future and projected impacts to elk populations  
9 and herd health;

10 (d) Design hunting rules and enforcement strategies that  
11 simultaneously honor treaty hunting rights and recognize the mutual  
12 benefit to both tribal and nontribal hunters of preserving and  
13 enhancing elk populations;

14 (e) Identify avenues that citizens who live near hunting areas can  
15 use to express their concerns and report incidents regarding the taking  
16 of elk, especially during hunting seasons;

17 (f) Identify existing elk research and enhancement efforts underway  
18 in the state by federal, state, and local governments, tribes, and  
19 private foundations and opportunities for possible cooperative efforts  
20 to maintain and rebuild elk populations in the future;

21 (g) Identify the resources needed to implement these various  
22 measures and possible funding sources; and

23 (h) Initiate other efforts the department of fish and wildlife  
24 feels it should undertake in order to gain a better understanding about  
25 elk hunting and Washington's elk populations.

26 (2) The department of fish and wildlife shall invite federally  
27 recognized Indian tribes with treaty hunting rights to participate in  
28 a series of discussions on Washington's elk populations and elk  
29 management issues. Through these discussions, the department shall  
30 work with the tribal representatives to identify strategies to honor  
31 treaty hunting rights and to maintain and rebuild the elk populations.  
32 In establishing a format for these discussions, the department shall  
33 provide opportunities for nontribal elk hunters, residents near areas  
34 where elk hunting takes place, and other interested parties to express  
35 their concerns and contribute their constructive suggestions.

1       (3) The department of fish and wildlife shall report on the status  
2 of subsections (1) and (2) of this section to the legislature by  
3 December 1, 1998.

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