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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1609**

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**State of Washington**

**56th Legislature**

**1999 Regular Session**

**By** House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Alexander, Regala, Clements, DeBolt, Doumit, Pennington, Eickmeyer, Grant, Mielke, Boldt, Conway and Dickerson)

Read first time 02/22/1999.

1 AN ACT Relating to maintaining and rebuilding elk populations;  
2 adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW; creating new sections; and  
3 making appropriations.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares that:

6 (1) Healthy elk populations are a tremendous resource to the rural  
7 economy of Washington, bringing thousands of observers, photographers,  
8 and hunters to interact with elk. Elk are also important to  
9 maintaining healthy ecosystems;

10 (2) Certain Washington elk populations are at risk due to habitat  
11 changes and increased hunting pressures;

12 (3) Different cultural perspectives toward hunting, different  
13 tribal and nontribal regulations and enforcement procedures, and  
14 different views regarding treaty hunting privileges have contributed to  
15 tensions between tribal and nontribal elk hunters;

16 (4) Tribal and nontribal elk hunters share a common interest in  
17 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations in order to ensure that  
18 there will continue to be elk hunting and viewing opportunities; and

1 (5) Combining new policies with discussions to cultivate this  
2 common interest could yield ways to reduce tensions while also  
3 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations for the continued benefit of  
4 all Washington citizens.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12 RCW  
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) The department shall:

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

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

14 (c) Delineate changes in historic elk ranges along with anticipated  
15 habitat changes in the future and projected impacts to elk populations  
16 and herd health;

17 (d) Design hunting rules and enforcement strategies that  
18 simultaneously honor tribal hunting privileges and recognize the mutual  
19 benefit to both tribal and nontribal hunters of preserving and  
20 enhancing elk populations;

21 (e) Identify avenues whereby interested citizens can volunteer in  
22 programs to collect needed biological data, assist in preventing  
23 poaching and apprehending poachers, and identify ways for those who  
24 live near hunting areas to express their concerns and report the taking  
25 of elk;

26 (f) Identify existing elk research and enhancement efforts underway  
27 in Washington state by federal, state, and local governments, tribes,  
28 and private foundations, and opportunities for possible cooperative  
29 efforts to maintain and rebuild elk populations in the future;

30 (g) Identify additional resources, including possible funding  
31 sources, needed to implement these various measures; and

32 (h) Initiate other necessary efforts in order for the department to  
33 gain a better understanding of elk hunting and of Washington's elk  
34 populations.

35 In accomplishing (a) through (h) of this subsection, the department  
36 shall place primary emphasis on the Packwood, Olympic Peninsula,  
37 Nooksack, North Rainier, and Blue Mountains elk herds. The Colockum,

1 Yakima, and Willapa Hills elk herds shall also receive increased  
2 attention to prevent foreseeable declines.

3 (2) The department shall invite federally recognized Indian tribes  
4 with hunting privileges to participate in a series of discussions on  
5 Washington's elk populations and elk management issues. Through these  
6 discussions, the department shall work with tribal representatives to  
7 identify strategies that honor tribal hunting privileges while  
8 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations. In establishing a format  
9 for these discussions, the department shall provide opportunities for  
10 nontribal elk hunters, residents near areas where elk hunting takes  
11 place, and other interested parties to express their concerns and  
12 contribute their constructive suggestions.

13 (3) By December 1, 2000, the department shall report to the  
14 legislature on the status of subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The sum of one hundred twenty-five  
16 thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is  
17 appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2000, from the general  
18 fund to the department of fish and wildlife for the purposes of this  
19 act.

20 (2) The sum of one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars, or as much  
21 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending  
22 June 30, 2001, from the general fund to the department of fish and  
23 wildlife for the purposes of this act.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of this  
25 act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not provided by  
26 June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act is null and  
27 void.

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