

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1465

C 246 L 17
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Exempting from public disclosure certain information regarding reports on wolf depredations.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Govt, Elections & IT (originally sponsored by Representatives Short, Lytton, Kretz, Koster, Schmick and Fitzgibbon).

House Committee on State Government, Elections & Information Technology
Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Parks

Background:

Wolf Management Information. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) operates under a legislative mandate to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the state's wildlife. Some of the DFW's responsibilities include managing hunting and fishing activities and protecting endangered species.

The DFW has listed the gray wolf as an endangered species and has adopted a wolf conservation and management plan to promote wolf recovery, as well as livestock and wildlife protection. The plan includes preventative measures to control wolf predation, including nonlethal and lethal actions. The DFW monitors wolf activity in the state and must publish on its website all reported interactions with wolves and other predatory animals, including depredations on humans, pets, and livestock. The DFW is authorized to pay owners who report the loss of livestock due to depredations by wolves and other predatory animals.

Public Records Act. The Public Records Act (PRA) requires state and local agencies to make their written records available to the public for inspection and copying upon request, unless the information fits into one of the various specific exemptions in the PRA or as otherwise provided in law. The stated policy of the PRA favors disclosure and requires narrow application of the listed exemptions.

The PRA exempts from public disclosure certain sensitive fish and wildlife data that is collected and shared with the DFW and other agencies for research and management purposes. The information generally relates to the location of protected species. The

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exemption does not apply to the reported data regarding interactions with predatory animals, including wolves, that the DFW collects and publishes on its website.

Public Records Sunshine Committee. The Public Records Exemption Accountability Committee, commonly referred to as the Sunshine Committee, was formed in 2007 to provide annual recommendations to the Legislature on whether existing exemptions to the PRA should be continued, modified, or terminated. The Sunshine Committee has 13 members, representing the Governor, State Auditor, Legislature, local governments, and stakeholders.

Summary:

Certain information related to persons involved in measures to minimize wolf interactions is exempt from public disclosure. Such information includes the personal identifying information of any person, including a pet or livestock owner, who has a current damage prevention cooperation agreement with the DFW and who is involved in deploying nonlethal preventative measures to minimize wolf interactions, as well as the legal description of that person's home, ranch, or farm.

The exemption also protects the information of people involved in reporting and responding to depredations by wolves on pets and livestock. Such information includes the personal identifying information of:

- any person who reports a wolf depredation;
- any owner whose pet or livestock is subject to a wolf depredation, including that owner's family and employees, and the legal description, coordinates, or name of his or her home, farm or ranch; and
- any DFW employee or contractor who directly responds to a depredation or assists in the lethal removal of a wolf.

The exemptions created in the act expire June 30, 2022. The Sunshine Committee must report to the Legislature by December 1, 2021, with recommendations on whether the exemptions should be extended beyond 2022. The recommendations must consider whether the development of the state's wolf management policy has diminished the risks of threats to personal safety to the degree that the exemptions are no longer necessary.

Votes on Final Passage:

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|--------|----|---|---------------------------|
| House | 95 | 2 | |
| Senate | 40 | 7 | (Senate amended) |
| House | | | (House refused to concur) |
| Senate | 45 | 4 | (Senate receded/amended) |
| House | 92 | 4 | (House concurred) |

Effective: July 23, 2017