
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1872

Brief Description: Providing for the partial delisting of the gray wolf by the fish and wildlife commission.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Blake, Short, Kraft, Haler and Shea.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies that the Fish and Wildlife Commission may not maintain a designation for the gray wolf in certain counties east of the Cascade Mountains, and must immediately amend any rules necessary to conform with the change.

Hearing Date: 2/15/17

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

State and Federal Species Designation.

State and Federal law have the authority to separately list species as sensitive, threatened, or endangered. The State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has the authority to identify species within the state that are seriously threatened with extinction and designate those species as sensitive, threatened, or endangered. The Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) must request species classification. The list of species identified as threatened or endangered in Washington is established in rule.

The Commission may only list a species as sensitive, threatened, or endangered based on the preponderance of scientific data regarding the biological status of the species under consideration. Species may be classified when populations are vulnerable or are in danger of declining or failing.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Once listed, the Commission must rely on the preponderance of available scientific data when making delisting or reclassification decisions. A species may be delisted from endangered, threatened, or sensitive only when populations are no longer in danger of failing, declining, or are no longer vulnerable. The listing of a species by the Commission requires the creation of a management plan for the species. The management plan must identify target population objectives, reclassification criteria, an implementation plan, public education, and a species monitoring plan.

Gray Wolf Listing Status.

Federal law lists the gray wolf as an endangered species for the portion of the State located west of Highway 97 in central Washington. The Commission has listed the gray wolf as an endangered species for the entirety of the state, and adopted a gray wolf conservation and management plan (conservation and management plan) in December of 2011.

The conservation and management plan identifies three wolf recovery regions: (1) the Eastern Washington region; (2) the North Cascades region; and (3) the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast region. The recovery objectives to allow the wolf to be removed from the state's endangered species list are based on target numbers and species distribution. Specifically the gray wolf will be considered for state delisting if the DFW documents the following:

- 15 successful breeding pairs for three consecutive years, distributed so that each recovery region contains least four breeding pairs; or
- 18 successful breeding pairs, distributed so that each recovery region contains at least four breeding pairs.

Other.

There are four counties in Washington located east of the crest of the Cascade mountain range that share a border with Canada: Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties.

Summary of Bill:

The Commission may not designate, or maintain a designation for the gray wolf as a sensitive, threatened, or endangered species in counties east of the crest of the cascades that share a border with Canada. The Commission must immediately amend any rules necessary to conform with this change.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.