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## Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

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### HB 2424

**Brief Description:** Updating cooperative agreements between the state and federally recognized tribes for the successful collaborative management of Washington's wildlife resources.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kretz, Lekanoff, Springer, Schmick, Dent and Chapman.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to engage with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation on a government-to-government basis to align gray wolf management strategies in certain areas.

**Hearing Date:** 1/26/24

**Staff:** Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

#### Background:

##### Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

Indian Tribes in the United States hold both the right and authority to manage fish and wildlife on lands which were retained by Tribes or were set aside for Tribal use by treaties, statutes, judicial decisions, executive orders, or agreements. These lands are managed by Tribes in accordance with Tribal goals, objectives, and vision within the framework of federal laws.

The original Colville Indian Reservation was established by Presidential Executive Order on April 9, 1872. The reservation was subsequently divided in to north and south halves and, in 1892, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Tribes) ceded the North Half of the reservation to the United States while reserving rights to hunt and fish on those lands.

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

### Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is tasked with managing the state's fish and wildlife resources. This responsibility includes establishing the time, place, manner, and methods by which to harvest or enjoy fish and wildlife.

### Cooperative Management Agreement.

The DFW and the Colville Tribes entered into a cooperative agreement in 1998 that addresses a variety of fishery and wildlife management issues including wildlife protection and preservation on the current Colville Reservation and the North Half through a variety of strategies including joint and cooperative surveying and information sharing.

### Gray Wolves.

Both the state and federal governments maintain designations for the gray wolf in Washington as endangered or protected. Federal law lists the gray wolf as an endangered species for the portion of the state located west of highways 97, 17, and 395 that run through Central Washington.

The State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has authority to classify endangered and threatened species in Washington by rule, and has classified the gray wolf as an endangered species statewide. A wildlife species may be removed from state listing when, based on the preponderance of scientific data available, its populations either: are no longer in danger of failing, declining, or are vulnerable due to certain factors including limited numbers, disease, predation, exploitation, or habitat loss or change; or meet target population objectives set out in a DFW-developed and Commission-adopted recovery plan.

The Commission adopted the Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Conservation and Management Plan) in December 2011, which identifies target population objectives, management tools, reclassification criteria, an implementation plan, and a species monitoring plan. The Conservation and Management Plan identifies three wolf recovery regions: the Eastern Washington region; the North Cascades region; and the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast region. The recovery objectives identified in the Conservation and Management Plan to allow the gray wolf to be removed from the state's endangered species list are based on target numbers and species distribution.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The DFW must engage with the Colville Tribes on a government-to-government basis to update the 1998 cooperative management agreement with respect to gray wolf management on the area known as "North Half." Specifically, the DFW must align its approach to gray wolf management on the North Half with the approach of the Colville Tribes within the boundaries of the Colville Reservation. The DFW must provide a report to the Legislature by June 30, 2025, that includes a plan to align its approach to wolf management on the North Half with the approach of the Colville Tribes within the boundaries of the Colville Reservation.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 21, 2024.

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