
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2434

Brief Description: Eliminating the fish and wildlife commission in order to redirect efforts towards fishing and hunting culture for tribal and nontribal persons.

Sponsors: Representative Wilcox.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and transfers the powers and duties of the Commission to the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Director).
- Requires the Director to be appointed by the Governor with the consent of both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Hearing Date: 2/21/24

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is composed of the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Director). The Commission is the executive head of the Department and operates under a statutory mandate to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage Washington's wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish. This responsibility includes establishing basic rules and regulations governing hunting and fishing seasons and maximizing fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations.

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.

The Commission is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Each even-numbered year, three Commissioners are appointed for six-year terms. Three members of the Commission must reside in Eastern Washington, three in Western Washington, and the remaining three members are appointed at-large. No two members may reside in the same county. If a vacancy occurs on the Commission before the end of the Commissioner's term, the Governor must appoint a successor within 60 days to complete the term. The Commission selects its own staff and appoints the Director of the Department (Director). The Commission may delegate to the Director any of the powers and duties vested in the Commission.

Summary of Bill:

The Commission is eliminated, and statutes pertaining to the creation and administration of the Commission are repealed. The Director replaces the Commission as the executive head of the Department and must be appointed by the Governor with the consent of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Director may not serve unless they receive consent from both chambers of the Legislature. The powers and duties of the Commission are transferred to the Director and amended to specify that the Director must maximize fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreational opportunities that are compatible with healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations for both tribal and nontribal persons and use best available science when establishing hunting and fishing seasons.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 30, 2025.