

Wolf management legislation signed into law, expands compensation

Local News

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OLYMPIA - Gov. Jay Inslee today signed legislation that will provide state wildlife managers more resources to prevent wolf-livestock conflict and expand criteria for compensation to livestock owners for wolf-related losses. Senate Bill 5193, requested by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and prime-sponsored by Sen. John Smith, R-Colville, was supported by a broad cross-section of interest groups. "The gray wolf population is recovering quickly in Washington," said Inslee. "This bill received bipartisan support from legislators across the state because it represents a practical, realistic approach to minimizing wolf-livestock conflict while recognizing the need for fair compensation to ranchers and farmers." WDFW Director Phil Anderson said the department appreciates the Governor's support for the bill and the efforts of both Republican and Democratic legislators to get it passed. "Washington state is committed to wolf recovery, but sustainable recovery requires that we address the legitimate needs of farmers, ranchers and other residents of the communities that are on the front line of wolf recovery," he said. "This bill does that."

As signed by the Governor, SB 5193: Increases the state's personalized license plate fee by \$10, effective Oct. 1, 2013, with the proceeds to support WDFW's efforts to monitor wolf recovery and prevent wolf-livestock conflict in collaboration with farmers, ranchers and local governments, and to compensate livestock owners. The Department of Licensing estimates the fee will raise more than \$1.5 million during the upcoming two-year budget cycle. Allows WDFW to compensate livestock owners for their losses at the current market value of the animals. Permits compensation regardless of whether livestock owners were raising the animals for commercial purposes. Revises other elements of state law to make it more consistent with the state's 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management Plan as adopted by the state Fish and Wildlife Commission. State wildlife managers estimate between 50 and 100 gray wolves are present in the state, and that the wolf population nearly doubled in 2012. As of March, there were 10 confirmed packs and two suspected packs, plus two packs with dens in Oregon and British Columbia whose members range into the state. Most of the confirmed packs are found in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Nate Pamplin, the WDFW wildlife program director, said broad support for SB 5193 sends a clear signal about the importance of collaboration to support long-term wolf recovery while respecting community values. The final version of the bill passed the Senate 43-1 and the House 96-2. "By supporting key elements of the wolf management plan - monitoring, conflict prevention and compensation - this new law furthers wolf recovery and acknowledges the impacts on farmers, ranchers and local communities," Pamplin said. Pamplin urged residents to contact the nearest WDFW office for assistance with measures to prevent wolf-livestock conflict. Also, he said, people can call a WDFW hotline at 1-877-933-9847 or use the website (http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/gray_wolf/) to report wolf sightings or suspected attacks.