



# Wolf Conflict Management

## HB 1219 & SB 5193



**Problem: Increasing wolf-livestock conflict**

As wolves return to Washington from neighboring states and provinces and re-establish themselves here, they will increase the potential for damage to livestock and property.

The gray wolf is listed as an endangered species statewide under state law and in the western two-thirds of the state under federal law. As of July 2012, wildlife biologists had confirmed eight wolf packs within the state and suspect there were four additional packs based on public reports and observed tracks. The number of confirmed packs represents an increase from two in 2010, indicating that the wolf population in Washington is rebounding, which also increases the potential for conflict with rural residents.

Washington’s elected officials and the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) have responded to these emerging issues in several ways. For example:

- In 2009, state lawmakers amended the wildlife damage law (RCW 77.36) to authorize compensation for livestock losses.
- In 2011, after several years of study and public outreach, the Department of Fish and Wildlife adopted its comprehensive Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, which identified several strategies to minimize wolf-livestock conflict.
- In 2012, the Governor and Legislature appropriated \$50,000 in one-time funding from the state wildlife account to compensate livestock owners who suffered losses due to depredation by wolves and other carnivores.

These and other actions recognize that successful wolf restoration and management efforts will require a wide range of inter-related actions, including:

- Monitoring of wolf locations, movements and survival;
- Quick and efficient responses to wolf-livestock depredation incidents;
- Assistance to livestock owners; and
- Public outreach and education.

**Solution: An ongoing, appropriate source of funds for conflict management**

WDFW is proposing legislation that would strengthen the state’s wolf management capacity in several ways. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Create a new wolf background plate to serve as an ongoing funding source for the management of wolves. Sales would raise an estimated \$100,000 per year for non-lethal wolf management strategies.

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- Fund pro-active strategies to help avoid wolf-livestock conflict, including cost-sharing agreements to help livestock owners implement non-lethal prevention strategies.
- Add the gray wolf to the state's legal classification of big game species, thereby instituting a criminal penalty for poaching of up to \$4,000. This approach anticipates the removal of wolves from endangered status and would enable WDFW to address poaching within a comprehensive hunting framework.

## Potential benefits: Strategic, thoughtful long-term carnivore management

This proposal includes multiple strategies to accomplish the long-term goals of the state wolf plan, particularly to increase public tolerance by compensating people who suffer livestock losses, sharing with livestock owners the cost of measures designed to avoid wolf-livestock conflict, and conducting public education and outreach programs across the state.

The ongoing funding authorized by this legislation would ensure continuation of efforts to inform the public about carnivores and how to avoid conflicts; warning local communities when wolves are known to be in close proximity to livestock or people; and reimbursing livestock operators for their losses due to predation.

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