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**HOUSE BILL 2434**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representative Wilcox

1       AN ACT Relating to eliminating the fish and wildlife commission  
2 in order to redirect efforts towards fishing and hunting culture for  
3 tribal and nontribal persons; amending RCW 43.300.010, 43.300.020,  
4 77.04.055, and 77.04.080; creating a new section; repealing RCW  
5 43.300.040, 77.04.020, 77.04.030, 77.04.040, and 77.04.060; and  
6 providing an effective date.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

8       NEW SECTION.       **Sec. 1.**       (1) The legislature finds that our  
9 government's first promise to uphold the rights of tribal members to  
10 hunt and fish in their traditional territories began with the  
11 treaties in the 1850s. The Boldt decision further solidified these  
12 rights by affirming the tribes' entitlement to 50 percent of the  
13 available fishery resources. This allocation ensures a balance,  
14 allowing tribal and nontribal members, including sport and commercial  
15 hunters and fishers, access to abundant opportunities for fishing and  
16 hunting. Today, the fish and wildlife commission is tasked with  
17 fulfilling the state's commitment to hunters and fishers in  
18 Washington. The fish and wildlife commission's mission, as outlined  
19 in their legislative mandate, is to "maximize fishing, hunting, and  
20 outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and  
21 diverse fish and wildlife populations." They have failed to live up

1 to their purpose. They have made decisions contrary to the promises  
2 they and those that have come before them have made. They have  
3 ignored the science and their own staff, letting special interests  
4 dictate the department of fish and wildlife's direction and ignoring  
5 legislated mandates.

6 (2) The legislature further finds that Washington state has a  
7 rich fishing and hunting culture for both tribal and nontribal people  
8 that is deeply intertwined with the state's history. These traditions  
9 often include rituals, stories, and values that bind communities  
10 together, fostering a deep appreciation for nature and the  
11 responsible use and stewardship of natural resources. It is  
12 imperative that the legislature take decisive action to preserve this  
13 valuable culture and prevent it from being lost due to broken  
14 promises.

15 (3) The legislature intends to dissolve the fish and wildlife  
16 commission and entrust the department of fish and wildlife to a  
17 director who will uphold Washington state's promises to its citizens.  
18 This new structure will allow the state to keep its commitment to  
19 managing a diverse and robust ecosystem, thereby ensuring the  
20 continued legacy of the people of the state.

21 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.300.010 and 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 2 are each amended  
22 to read as follows:

23 There is hereby created a department of state government to be  
24 known as the department of fish and wildlife. The department shall be  
25 vested with all powers and duties transferred to it under this  
26 chapter and such other powers and duties as may be authorized by law.  
27 All powers, duties, and functions of the department of fisheries and  
28 the department of wildlife are transferred to the department of fish  
29 and wildlife. All references in the Revised Code of Washington to the  
30 director or the department of fisheries ~~((or))~~, the director or  
31 department of wildlife, or the fish and wildlife commission shall be  
32 construed to mean the director or department of fish and wildlife.

33 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.300.020 and 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 3 are each amended  
34 to read as follows:

35 As used in this chapter, unless the context indicates otherwise:

36 (1) "Department" means the department of fish and wildlife.

37 (2) "Director" means the director of fish and wildlife.

38 ~~((3) "Commission" means the fish and wildlife commission.))~~

1       **Sec. 4.** RCW 77.04.055 and 2000 c 107 s 204 are each amended to  
2 read as follows:

3       (1) In establishing policies to preserve, protect, and perpetuate  
4 wildlife, fish, and wildlife and fish habitat, the ~~((commission))~~  
5 director shall meet annually with the governor to:

6       (a) Review and prescribe basic goals and objectives related to  
7 those policies; and

8       (b) Review the performance of the department in implementing fish  
9 and wildlife policies.

10       The ~~((commission))~~ director shall maximize fishing, hunting, and  
11 outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and  
12 diverse fish and wildlife populations for tribal and nontribal  
13 persons.

14       (2) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall establish hunting,  
15 trapping, and fishing seasons and prescribe the time, place, manner,  
16 and methods that may be used to harvest or enjoy game fish and  
17 wildlife using the best available science.

18       (3) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall establish provisions  
19 regulating food fish and shellfish as provided in RCW 77.12.047.

20       (4) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall have final approval  
21 authority for tribal, interstate, international, and any other  
22 department agreements relating to fish and wildlife.

23       (5) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall adopt rules to implement  
24 the state's fish and wildlife laws.

25       (6) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall have final approval  
26 authority for the department's budget proposals.

27       ~~The ((commission) shall select its own staff and shall appoint~~  
28 ~~the director of the)~~ department ~~((The director and commission))~~  
29 staff shall serve at the pleasure of the ~~((commission))~~ director.

30       **Sec. 5.** RCW 77.04.080 and 2000 c 107 s 205 are each amended to  
31 read as follows:

32       The executive and administrative head of the department of fish  
33 and wildlife shall be the director. The director shall be appointed  
34 by the governor with the consent of both the senate and the house of  
35 representatives and shall have complete charge of and supervisory  
36 power over the department. A person may not serve in the capacity of  
37 director without the consent of both the senate and the house of  
38 representatives. Persons eligible for appointment as director shall  
39 have practical knowledge of the habits and distribution of fish and

1 wildlife. The director shall supervise the administration and  
2 operation of the department and perform the duties prescribed by law  
3 (~~and delegated by the commission~~). The director shall carry out the  
4 basic goals and objectives prescribed under RCW 77.04.055. The  
5 director may appoint and employ necessary personnel. The director may  
6 delegate, in writing, to department personnel the duties and powers  
7 necessary for efficient operation and administration of the  
8 department.

9 Only persons having general knowledge of the fisheries and  
10 wildlife resources and of the commercial and recreational fishing  
11 industry in this state are eligible for appointment as director. The  
12 director shall not have a financial interest in the fishing industry  
13 or a directly related industry. The director shall receive the salary  
14 fixed by the governor under RCW 43.03.040.

15 (~~The director is the ex officio secretary of the commission and  
16 shall attend its meetings and keep a record of its business.~~)

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The following acts or parts of acts are  
18 each repealed:

19 (1) RCW 43.300.040 (Director's duties) and 1996 c 267 s 33 & 1993  
20 sp.s. c 2 s 5;

21 (2) RCW 77.04.020 (Composition of department—Powers and duties)  
22 and 2000 c 107 s 202, 1996 c 267 s 32, 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 59, 1987 c  
23 506 s 4, 1980 c 78 s 3, & 1955 c 36 s 77.04.020;

24 (3) RCW 77.04.030 (Commission—Appointment) and 2001 c 155 s 1,  
25 2000 c 107 s 203, 1994 c 264 s 52, 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 60, 1987 c 506 s  
26 5, 1981 c 338 s 11, 1980 c 78 s 4, & 1955 c 36 s 77.04.030;

27 (4) RCW 77.04.040 (Commission—Qualifications of members) and 1995  
28 1st sp.s. c 2 s 3 (Referendum Bill No. 45, approved November 7,  
29 1995), 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 61, 1987 c 506 s 6, 1980 c 78 s 5, & 1955 c  
30 36 s 77.04.040; and

31 (5) RCW 77.04.060 (Commission—Meetings—Officers—Compensation,  
32 travel expenses) and 2013 c 23 s 238 & 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 63.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** This act takes effect June 30, 2025.

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