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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 4002

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State of Washington                      64th Legislature                      2015 Regular Session

By Representatives Kretz, Blake, Short, and Condotta

Read first time 01/28/15.    Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1            TO THE HONORABLE DOCTOR BRADLEY SMITH, CHAIR OF THE WASHINGTON  
2 FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION, DOCTOR JAMES UNSWORTH, DIRECTOR OF THE  
3 WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE, AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE  
4 WASHINGTON FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION:

5            We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of  
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,  
7 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

8            WHEREAS, The story of the recovery of the gray wolf in  
9 Washington, though still in its early chapters, is showing signs that  
10 suggest it will soon become the story of one of the most successful  
11 recoveries of an extirpated apex species in United States history;  
12 and

13            WHEREAS, Gray wolves are again roaming the ancient forests and  
14 mountains of the Pacific Northwest, establishing new packs,  
15 reclaiming old territories, and recovering faster in Washington than  
16 even the most optimistic projections expected; and

17            WHEREAS, The howl of the gray wolf in the Washington night,  
18 albeit a song of nature's resilience, is also a song of trepidation  
19 for those whose lives and livelihoods share the same landscape and  
20 who must dance in careful, balanced steps with the wolf; and

21            WHEREAS, The long-term, permanent recovery of the gray wolf in  
22 Washington requires not only the sensible management of the species,  
23 but also a careful balancing of the needs of the species with the

1 needs, customs, and cultures of the communities that are neighbors to  
2 the wolf; and

3 WHEREAS, There is a geographic imbalance in the initial, and  
4 foreseeable, stages of wolf recovery that places an unproportioned  
5 burden on certain portions of the state, and the communities and  
6 citizens in those areas, to serve as the nursery for statewide wolf  
7 recovery; and

8 WHEREAS, Untold hours of labor, much of it volunteered, was spent  
9 by dedicated, hardworking, and well-meaning people to develop the  
10 existing wolf conservation and management plan under which the  
11 species is currently managed; and

12 WHEREAS, The existing wolf conservation and management plan, as  
13 important of a road map as it is towards directing wolf recovery, did  
14 not anticipate the current rate of recovery or lack of geographic  
15 diversity in the recovery pattern; and

16 WHEREAS, Changes to the wolf conservation and management plan may  
17 be needed to lessen the effect of the current uneven geographic  
18 density of wolf populations on rural communities, livestock  
19 producers, and the wolves themselves; and

20 WHEREAS, Treating the wolf conservation and management plan as a  
21 living document, and not the final word on recovery principles, by  
22 making small changes to its contents given current conditions would  
23 not only aid the wolf in its journey back across the great state of  
24 Washington, but also help to ensure that the social tolerance needed  
25 to support long-term recovery is secure and the story of wolf  
26 recovery is celebrated by all Washingtonians; and

27 WHEREAS, Relatively minor revisions to the wolf conservation and  
28 management plan, such as viewing recovery in terms of viable packs as  
29 opposed to breeding pairs, or counting success as having wolves in  
30 two out of three recovery zones, would make a tangible difference in  
31 public support for wolf recovery without jeopardizing the recovery  
32 itself; and

33 WHEREAS, The fish and wildlife commission has already been  
34 delegated the full authority, and incumbent responsibility, it needs  
35 to amend the wolf conservation and management plan as necessary to  
36 ensure the sustainable recovery of wolves in the context of  
37 sustainable rural communities demanded by all Washingtonians;

38 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the fish  
39 and wildlife commission:

1 (1) Embark on a revisiting of the wolf conservation and  
2 management plan, not to recreate or replace the results of the hard  
3 work contained within its pages, but to make amendments colored by  
4 the lessons learned since its adoption so that the plan itself may be  
5 a living document that is responsive to the management needs of the  
6 species, the customs and cultures of the affected communities, and  
7 the delicate balance that must be achieved between the two;

8 (2) Revisit the listing status assigned to the gray wolf by the  
9 commission and consider a regional change in listing status based on  
10 the health of gray wolf populations in the disproportionately  
11 affected areas of the state in the context of overall wolf  
12 populations in the greater Pacific Northwest and British Columbia;  
13 and

14 (3) Prepare a document that may be presented to the 2016  
15 legislature that outlines a commitment, process, timeline, and scope  
16 of work for addressing the unintentional and perhaps unforeseen  
17 conflicts between unevenly spaced recovering wolf populations and  
18 their neighboring communities; a commitment that must be made if  
19 Washington is going to enjoy the mutually inclusive benefits of a  
20 vibrant wolf population and vibrant rural communities.

21 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately  
22 transmitted to the Honorable Doctor Bradley Smith, chair of the  
23 Washington fish and wildlife commission, Doctor James Unsworth,  
24 director of the Washington department of fish and wildlife, and the  
25 other members of the Washington fish and wildlife commission.

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