
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5525

State of Washington

66th Legislature

2019 Regular Session

By Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senator Short)

READ FIRST TIME 02/22/19.

1 AN ACT Relating to whitetail deer population estimates; and
2 adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) The department must actively work toward managing whitetail
7 deer populations in district one of region one with the goal of
8 increasing the deer counted per mile in the late summer surveys to
9 fall within the range of eight to nine deer counted per survey mile.

10 (2) Each year, beginning with the 2019 population assessment, in
11 district one of region one, the department must conduct a minimum of
12 six traditional standardized fifteen mile transect counts including
13 the Kelly hill standard transect in game management unit 105, the
14 Douglas standard transect in game management unit 108, the Deep creek
15 standard transect in game management units 108 and 111, the Summit
16 valley standard transect in the central portion of game management
17 unit 121, the Clayton standard transect in the southern portion of
18 game management unit 117, and the Daisy-Maud standard transect in the
19 western portion of game management unit 121. This subsection does not
20 preclude the department from using additional, updated methods of
21 counting, as long as those methods are an enhancement to the

1 traditional transect data being collected under this subsection. It
2 is critical that the consistency of the standardized transects listed
3 in this subsection be maintained to preserve the long-term trends of
4 the data collected.

5 (3) The transect counts under this section must track and report
6 buck-to-doe ratios and fawn-to-doe ratios, and also demonstrate
7 whitetail deer density and trends. The department must conduct the
8 first set of transect counts as described in subsection (2) of this
9 section in the month of August to determine buck-to-doe ratio,
10 density, and overall population. The department must conduct the
11 second set of transect counts as described in subsection (2) of this
12 section in the month of September to determine fawn-to-doe ratio,
13 density, and overall population. The ratios are an important factor
14 to understand the current and future health of the whitetail deer
15 population.

16 (4) The department shall convene two annual meetings in district
17 one of region one to discuss transect counts with a local, nonprofit
18 wildlife group based in Stevens county that has expertise in wildlife
19 management and hunting. One meeting must be held to discuss the
20 department's plan for that calendar year's transect counts and
21 methodology and to coordinate local volunteers to assist in data
22 collection. Another meeting must be held to discuss the findings and
23 outcome of that calendar year's transect counts, buck-to-doe ratios
24 and fawn-to-doe ratios, density and trends, updated rolling ten-year
25 average, and compliant hunter harvest data. The department should use
26 these meetings to seek opportunities to integrate local knowledge and
27 expertise into its work on wildlife management and hunting seasons.

28 (5) To increase meaningful public participation in the
29 establishment of hunting seasons, the department must provide the
30 public with timely access to both compliant and noncompliant hunter
31 harvest data. The department must make compliant hunter harvest data
32 available to the public fourteen days after the January 31st deadline
33 for hunters to report their harvest to the department. The department
34 must make noncompliant hunter harvest data available no later than
35 thirty days prior to a commission meeting to establish hunting
36 seasons. The data must include a description of the assumptions and
37 methodology used for determining noncompliant hunter harvest data.

38 (6) The department must recalculate the estimate of noncompliant
39 hunter harvest data for 2015 through 2019 using the methodology used
40 in 2013 and 2014. By December 31, 2019, the department must report

1 the recalculation and the differences between the two methodologies
2 to the natural resources committees of the legislature and the
3 commission and make the information available to the public.

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