

# Draft Periodic Status Review of Western Gray Squirrel in Washington

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Wildlife Diversity Division



Washington  
Department of  
**FISH &  
WILDLIFE**

Periodic Status Review Western Gray Squirrel and Classification Recommendation

WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species.

WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary Sheet.....	1
WAC 220-610-010.....	3
WAC 220-200-100.....	4
CR-102.....	6



## Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

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**Meeting date:**

11/17/2023

**Agenda item:**

Periodic Status Review Western Gray Squirrel and Classification Recommendation– Decision

**Presenter(s):**

Taylor Cotten

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**Background summary:**

Staff presented the final Periodic Status Review and classification recommendation for the Western Gray Squirrel at the October 2023 briefing. The squirrel is currently listed as a threatened species in WA. The Periodic Status Review summarizes the biology and conservation concerns for the species and recommends changes in classification from threatened to be endangered.

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**Staff recommendation:**

Uplist the Western Gray Squirrel from threatened to endangered.

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**Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:**

If approved, the Western Gray Squirrel will be added to the endangered wildlife list. A change in classification would also be communicated to the Department of Natural Resources for their forest practice considerations.

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**Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:**

None anticipated at this time.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

The Periodic Status Review had its own 90-day public comment period. Through that process we identified areas of confusion with western gray squirrels and eastern gray squirrels and what this status review and potential rule change could mean (incorrectly) for the common nonnative eastern gray squirrel. We also identified misunderstanding or confusion in the results of the data collected and analyzed to inform the draft Periodic Status Review which we have worked to clarify with stakeholders and have attempted to address in our final document available on the WDFW website (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02410>).

There was also public testimony during the October briefing as well as written and submitted comment as part of the rule-making and SEPA processes. In total we received over 900 comments on the classification change. More than 700 comments were one of two form letters in support of the recommendation to reclassify western

gray squirrels as endangered. We received 141 and 15 comments independent of the form letter supporting and opposing the recommendation respectively. However, we continue to see confusion over eastern and western gray squirrels and what this rule making applies to, so it is difficult to fully understand the relevance of every comment. We are working with the Communications and Public Engagement team to improve awareness and better share information on the two species. There are also two separate groups of comments related to voluntary habitat and land management to benefit squirrels. Those in favor (including local and statewide conservation groups) of the reclassification are describing how those voluntary actions are inadequate or ineffective, and those not in favor (including the WA Forest Protection Association, and Klickitat Board of Commissioners) of the uplisting describing a change in classification would discourage future voluntary actions.

**Action requested and/or proposed next steps:**

Recommended adoption of these rules as presented.

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**Draft motion language:**

Motion: I move to adopt the recommended rule changes as presented by staff.

Is there a “second”?

If so, then motion maker discusses basis for motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; +

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**Post decision communications plan:**

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Website  
News Release

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*Form revised 1-20-21*

**WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species.** Endangered species include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oregon vesper sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus affinis</i>
pygmy rabbit	<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>
fisher	<i>Pekania pennanti</i>
gray wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
grizzly bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>
fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
North Pacific right whale	<i>Eubalaena japonica</i>
sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>
woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>
sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
snowy plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>
upland sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>
western pond turtle	<i>Clemmys marmorata</i>
leatherback sea turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
mardon skipper	<i>Polites mardon</i>
Oregon silverspot butterfly	<i>Speyeria zerene hippolyta</i>
Oregon spotted frog	<i>Rana pretiosa</i>
northern leopard frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>
Taylor's checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas editha taylori</i>
Streaked horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris strigata</i>
Tufted puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>
North American lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>
marbled murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
Loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>
Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>
Pinto abalone	<i>Haliotis kamtschatkana</i>
Greater sage grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
Cascade red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes cascadenis</i>
<u>western gray squirrel</u>	<u><i>Sciurus griseus</i></u>

**WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished.** Protected wildlife are designated into three subcategories: Threatened, sensitive, and other.

(1) Threatened species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as threatened include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
<del>((western gray squirrel</del>	<del><i>Sciurus griseus</i></del>
sea otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
Mazama pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys mazama</i>
Columbian white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leucurus</i>

(2) Sensitive species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as sensitive include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
American white pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>
Gray whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Larch Mountain salamander	<i>Plethodon larselli</i>
Pygmy whitefish	<i>Prosopium coulteri</i>
Margined sculpin	<i>Cottus marginatus</i>
Olympic mudminnow	<i>Novumbra hubbsi</i>

(3) Other protected wildlife include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
cony or pika	<i>Ochotona princeps</i>
least chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>
yellow-pine chipmunk	<i>Tamias amoenus</i>
Townsend's chipmunk	<i>Tamias townsendii</i>
red-tailed chipmunk	<i>Tamias ruficaudus</i>
hoary marmot	<i>Marmota caligata</i>
Olympic marmot	<i>Marmota olympus</i>
Cascade golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus saturatus</i>
golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus lateralis</i>
Washington ground squirrel	<i>Urocitellus washingtoni</i>
red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
Douglas squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus douglasii</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
northern flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i>
Humboldt's flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys oregonensis</i>
wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
painted turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>
California mountain kingsnake	<i>Lampropeltis zonata</i>

All birds not classified as game birds, predatory birds or endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species; all bats, except when found in or immediately adjacent to a dwelling or other occupied building; mammals of the order *Cetacea*, including whales, porpoises, and mammals of the order *Pinnipedia* not otherwise classified as endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species. This section shall not apply to hair seals and sea lions which are threatening to damage or are damaging commercial fishing gear being utilized in a lawful manner or when said mammals are damaging or threatening to damage commercial fish being lawfully taken with commercial gear.



# PROPOSED RULE MAKING

**CR-102 (July 2022)**  
**(Implements RCW 34.05.320)**  
Do NOT use for expedited rule making

CODE REVISER USE ONLY

OFFICE OF THE CODE REVISER  
STATE OF WASHINGTON  
FILED

DATE: September 13, 2023

TIME: 1:54 PM

WSR 23-19-043

**Agency:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) (P2023-09]

Original Notice

Supplemental Notice to WSR \_\_\_\_\_

Continuance of WSR 23-17-138 filed on August 21, 2023

Preproposal Statement of Inquiry was filed as WSR 20-21-057 filed on October 14, 2020. ; or

Expedited Rule Making--Proposed notice was filed as WSR \_\_\_\_\_; or

Proposal is exempt under RCW 34.05.310(4) or 34.05.330(1); or

Proposal is exempt under RCW \_\_\_\_\_.

**Title of rule and other identifying information:** (describe subject)

PSR Western gray squirrel

WAC 220-200-100 and 220-610-010.

**Hearing location(s):**

Date:	Time:	Location: (be specific)	Comment:
October 27-28, 2023	8:00 a.m.	Olympia – Hybrid NRB – 1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501 Room 172	Information on how to register to testify at the public hearing is available at: <a href="http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission.meetings">http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission.meetings</a> , or contact the Commission office at (360)-902-2267.

**Date of intended adoption:** On or after November 17, 2023. (Note: This is NOT the effective date)

**Submit written comments to:**

Name: Wildlife Program

Address: PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504

Email: [gray-squirrel@PublicInput.com](mailto:gray-squirrel@PublicInput.com)

Fax: (360) 902-2162

Other: Phone: 855-925-2801 project code: 6483

Public Comment URL: <https://publicinput.com/gray-squirrel>

SEPA Email: [graysquirrelsepa@PublicInput.com](mailto:graysquirrelsepa@PublicInput.com)

By (date) October 27, 2023

**Assistance for persons with disabilities:**

Contact Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator

Phone: (360) 902-2349

Fax:

TTY: 1-800-833-6388 or 711

Email: Title6@dfw.wa.gov

Other: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>

By (date) October 27, 2023

**Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:** This rule amendment proposal, if adopted, reclassifies the western gray squirrel from threatened to endangered.

Anticipated effects include communicating a higher level of conservation concern for the species, their conservation needs, and recovery actions with partners and the public. Additionally, there is also an increased penalty for unlawful taking under RCW 77.15.120.

Finally, the western gray squirrel already has a recovery plan required by WAC 220-610-110.

If the status change is adopted, western gray squirrel will be removed from the list of threatened species in WAC 220-200-100 "Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished" and added to the list of endangered species under WAC 220-610-010.

**Reasons supporting proposal:** Important known threats to the western gray squirrel populations in Washington are:

- Habitat loss.
- Habitat degradation and fragmentation.
- Small population size and isolation.



- Disease and highway mortality.

Western Gray Squirrel habitat loss is linked to timber extraction, wildfire, and land conversion. Climate change is both a current and potential future threat to habitat. Examples include stand-replacement fire, changes in resulting stand composition, and effects on food supply such as production of fungi and seeds.

The southern Puget Trough population has increased since 2007's recovery plan. However, it is still very limited in size and constrained by the area and fragmentation of its habitat. In addition, the final Periodic Status Review describes continued habitat loss of >20% in the other two isolated core population areas on the east slope of the cascades due to timber extraction and wildfire. A primary threat identified in the original listing of the species was habitat loss, which has only increased since listing.

Because of the species' small total population size and the isolation of the three populations; continuing threats of wildfires and timber harvest; and a likely decline in habitat of >20% in both the North Cascades and Klickitat regions, it is recommended that the Western Gray Squirrel be uplisted to endangered in Washington.

**Statutory authority for adoption:** RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047.

**Statute being implemented:** RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047.

**Is rule necessary because of a:**

- |                         |                              |  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Federal Law?            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Federal Court Decision? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| State Court Decision?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

If yes, CITATION:

**Agency comments or recommendations, if any, as to statutory language, implementation, enforcement, and fiscal matters:** None.

**Type of proponent:**  Private  Public  Governmental

**Name of proponent:** (person or organization) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**Name of agency personnel responsible for:**

	Name	Office Location	Phone
Drafting:	Eric Gardner	1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501	(360) 902-2515
Implementation:	Eric Gardner	1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501	(360) 902-2515
Enforcement:	Steve Bear	1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501	(360) 902-2373

**Is a school district fiscal impact statement required under [RCW 28A.305.135](#)?**

- Yes  No

If yes, insert statement here:

The public may obtain a copy of the school district fiscal impact statement by contacting:

- Name:
- Address:
- Phone:
- Fax:
- TTY:
- Email:
- Other:

**Is a cost-benefit analysis required under [RCW 34.05.328](#)?**

- Yes: A preliminary cost-benefit analysis may be obtained by contacting:

- Name:
- Address:
- Phone:
- Fax:
- TTY:
- Email:
- Other:

- No: Please explain: This proposal does not require a cost benefit analysis under RCW 34.05.328

**Regulatory Fairness Act and Small Business Economic Impact Statement**

Note: The [Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance \(ORIA\)](#) provides support in completing this part.

**(1) Identification of exemptions:**

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, **may be exempt** from requirements of the Regulatory Fairness Act (see [chapter 19.85 RCW](#)). For additional information on exemptions, consult the [exemption guide published by ORIA](#). Please check the box for any applicable exemption(s):

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under [RCW 19.85.061](#) because this rule making is being adopted solely to conform and/or comply with federal statute or regulations. Please cite the specific federal statute or regulation this rule is being adopted to conform or comply with, and describe the consequences to the state if the rule is not adopted.

Citation and description:

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt because the agency has completed the pilot rule process defined by [RCW 34.05.313](#) before filing the notice of this proposed rule.

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under the provisions of [RCW 15.65.570\(2\)](#) because it was adopted by a referendum.

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under [RCW 19.85.025\(3\)](#). Check all that apply:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(b)<br>(Internal government operations) | <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(e)<br>(Dictated by statute)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(c)<br>(Incorporation by reference)     | <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(f)<br>(Set or adjust fees)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(d)<br>(Correct or clarify language)    | <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">RCW 34.05.310</a> (4)(g)<br>((i) Relating to agency hearings; or (ii) process requirements for applying to an agency for a license or permit) |

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under [RCW 19.85.025\(4\)](#) (does not affect small businesses).

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under RCW \_\_\_\_\_.

Explanation of how the above exemption(s) applies to the proposed rule:

**(2) Scope of exemptions:** *Check one.*

The rule proposal is fully exempt (*skip section 3*). Exemptions identified above apply to all portions of the rule proposal.

The rule proposal is partially exempt (*complete section 3*). The exemptions identified above apply to portions of the rule proposal, but less than the entire rule proposal. Provide details here (consider using [this template from ORIA](#)):

The rule proposal is not exempt (*complete section 3*). No exemptions were identified above.

**(3) Small business economic impact statement:** *Complete this section if any portion is not exempt.*

If any portion of the proposed rule is **not exempt**, does it impose more-than-minor costs (as defined by RCW 19.85.020(2)) on businesses?

No Briefly summarize the agency's minor cost analysis and how the agency determined the proposed rule did not impose more-than-minor costs. \_\_\_\_\_

Yes Calculations show the rule proposal likely imposes more-than-minor cost to businesses and a small business economic impact statement is required. Insert the required small business economic impact statement here:

The public may obtain a copy of the small business economic impact statement or the detailed cost calculations by contacting:

- Name:
- Address:
- Phone:
- Fax:
- TTY:
- Email:
- Other:

<b>Date:</b> September 13, 2023
<b>Name:</b> Scott Bird
<b>Title:</b> WDFW Agency Rules Coordinator

<b>Signature:</b> 
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