

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1146

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to increasing the amount of money available to the department of fish and wildlife to pay claims under RCW 77.36.040 without requiring the legislature to declare an emergency.

**Brief Description:** Increasing the amount of money available to pay wildlife damage claims.

**Sponsors:** Representatives B. Sullivan, Kretz, Pettigrew, Hinkle, Linville, Kristiansen, Blake, Takko, Newhouse, Warnick, Hailey, Grant, Armstrong, Kessler, Kenney, Haigh, Moeller and McCune.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/22/07, 1/31/07 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Increases the amount of money the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is authorized to use from the General Fund to reimburse the owners of commercial crops that have suffered losses due to deer or elk damage from \$30,000 to \$150,000.
- Removes the prohibition against using General Fund money to reimburse for crop damage that occurs in areas where hunting is allowed.
- Increases the amount of money the WDFW is authorized to use from the Wildlife Account to reimburse the owners of commercial crops that have suffered losses due to deer or elk damage from \$120,000 to \$150,000.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz,

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Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

The owners of a commercial agricultural or horticultural crop may apply to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for payment of damages caused by the browsing of wild deer or elk. Payments are limited to the value of the crop, but are generally capped at \$10,000 per claim.

The WDFW is limited to only spending \$30,000 per year from the General Fund on wildlife damage claims. In addition, the WDFW may spend up to \$120,000 per year from the Wildlife Account for the same purpose. The \$30,000 General Fund maximum may be raised if the Legislature declares an emergency due to unusual natural conditions that cause great damage to commercially raised crops. If an emergency is declared, the WDFW may use any additional funding appropriated to reimburse farmers for damage caused to crops by deer or elk.

Funding from the General Fund for crop damage reimbursement is limited to agricultural operations located within an area of a county or city where hunting has been prohibited by the local government.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The amount of money the WDFW is authorized to use from the General Fund to reimburse the owners of commercial crops that have suffered losses due to deer or elk damage is increased from \$30,000 to \$150,000. In addition, the amount of money in the Wildlife Account that the WDFW is authorized to use for the same purposes is increased from \$120,000 to \$150,000. The prohibition on the WDFW using General Fund money to pay compensation claims in areas where hunting is not prohibited by the local government is removed.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The original bill did not remove the prohibition against using General Fund money to reimburse for crop damage that occurs in areas where hunting is allowed.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This is a straight-forward bill that has been worked on by both the industry and the WDFW. Damage to crops is done by deer and elk, and wildlife is a public resource. As such, the general public, through the General Fund, should pay a larger percentage of reimbursements instead of the licensed hunters in the state.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Brian Sullivan, prime sponsor; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Bruce Bjork, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.