

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5626

As Reported By House Committee On:

Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to transport tags for game.

Brief Description: Providing game transport tags at no cost in order to meet harvest management goals.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Hargrove, Swecker, Hochstatter, Stevens, Schow, Strannigan and Anderson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 3/25/97, 4/3/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Buck, Chairman; Sump, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Regala, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander; Anderson; Chandler; Hatfield; Pennington and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: In order to hunt for certain species of wildlife, a person must purchase a hunting license and a separate transport tag. The transport tag requirement applies to hunting for deer, elk, bear, cougar, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, and wild turkey. Fees for transport tags are set in statute. The fee for a bear tag is \$18 for Washington residents and \$180 for non-residents. The fee for a cougar tag is \$24 for residents and \$360 for non-residents.

Black bear hunters have had the greatest hunting success using either bait or hounds. Cougar hunters have had the greatest success using hounds. Initiative 655, adopted at the November, 1996 election, limits the use of bait in bear hunting and the use of hounds in hunting black bear, cougar, bobcat, and lynx.

Summary of Bill: The current level of fees for bear and cougar transport tags is established as a ceiling, and the Fish and Wildlife Commission is given the discretion to establish lower fees. If the commission chooses to make the tags available at no

cost, then the commission may determine that, for purposes of achieving species harvest management goals, a transport tag is not required to hunt black bear or cougar.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Populations of bear and cougar are increasing, and complaints about these species are widespread. Initiative 655 removed the recreational use of hounds for hunting these species and the use of bait in hunting bear. The department is trying to respond to the loss of these tools by finding other ways to encourage recreational hunting of these species. The bill will help.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dave Brittell, Department of Fish and Wildlife.