

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1512

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Parks, Fish & Wildlife, April 1, 2003

Title: An act relating to controlling game damage to crops.

Brief Description: Allowing special hunts to reduce crop damage caused by wildlife.

Sponsors: House Committee on Fisheries, Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Cox, Fromhold, Sump, Schoesler, Hatfield, Ahern, Clements and Armstrong).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 3/31/03, 4/1/03 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Oke, Chair; Sheahan, Vice Chair; Doumit, Esser, Jacobsen, Morton, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Victor Moon (786-7469)

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife is instructed to work closely with landowners to find non-lethal solutions to problem wildlife. However, if such efforts are not practical, the department is authorized to increase the harvest of damage-causing animals during the hunting season. The department also has the discretionary authority to conduct special hunts in problem areas as a result of recurring complaints regarding property being damaged by wildlife.

In addition to special hunts, the owner or tenant of real property being damaged by wildlife is authorized to trap or kill problem wildlife that is causing damage to crops. However, that permission does not extend to endangered or threatened species, or to deer and elk. Problem deer and elk may only be killed with a take permit issued by the department, unless the situation is an emergency and the department has given the landowner verbal permission to harvest the deer or elk. On cattle ranching land, the owner may only declare an emergency if the department does not respond within 48 hours of notification. Even if an emergency situation exists, the owners of cattle ranching land may not kill the problem wildlife if they did not make the land available for public hunting during the previous hunting season.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission is authorized to conduct special hunts in areas where game populations exist at a level that damages property or over-utilizes the habitat. The commission's authority includes the ability to identify the number and sex of animals that are allowed to be taken. The director of the department is required to determine a selection system for the hunters allowed to participate in a special season that ensures a random selection.

Summary of Amended Bill: The commission is directed to authorize the issuance of either one or two antlerless permits per hunter for special hunts to be conducted in areas where the department, or its designee, has confirmed six incidents of agricultural and horticultural crop damage caused by deer or elk. If the commission does not issue permits for special hunts, it must take other remedial action, including relocation of the deer or elk to areas where herd development is needed. Complaints must be received from the owner or tenant of real property, or from several owners or tenants in the same locale.

The department is required to maintain a list of persons holding valid wildlife hunting licenses, arranged by county of residence, who are available to hunt deer or elk causing damage to crops. The department must update the list at least annually. When contacting people to help control game damage to crops, the department must use the list and must make all reasonable efforts to contact a resident of the county where the activity will occur before contacting a resident of a different county. The names on the list must be randomized in order to provide a fair distribution of the hunting opportunities. Hunters participating in these hunts must report their kills to the department, and the information provided must be included in a summary of wildlife harvested that is available to the public.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Relocation of deer and elk is authorized, and the commission must issue the hunt permit or take other remedial action.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Department of Fish and Wildlife need to take more positive actions to control problem deer and elk that damage crops.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Don Cox, prime sponsor (pro); Bruce Bjork, Steve Pozzanghera, Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (pro); Chris Madsen, NW Indian Fisheries Commission (pro).