

VETO MESSAGE ON 6118-S

March 31, 2004

To the Honorable President and Members,  
The Senate of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval as to section 2, Substitute Senate Bill No. 6118 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to a pilot program for cougar control;"

This bill requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to recommend rules to establish a three-year pilot program to allow for the pursuit and killing of cougars with the aid of dogs. The pilot program is limited to the counties of Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, and Okanogan. The bill also requires that these rules ensure that the hunts are designed to protect public safety, reflect cougar population data, and are consistent with recommendations on cougar population dynamics currently under development at Washington State University.

Section 2 of the bill would have allowed other counties to participate in the pilot project. This section expands the pilot's purposes beyond the limited geographic scope of the underlying bill and undermines the thoughtful research purposes of the pilot approach. As stated in section 3 of the bill, DFW is to follow the pilot with "a recommendation as to whether the pilot project would serve as a model for effective cougar management into the future." The pilot should be allowed to run its course, and future cougar management decisions should be based on the results and recommendations of this pilot project. Should unique human-cougar interactions arise in counties not subject to the pilot, the Commission already has some authority to authorize the use of dogs to combat the problem.

For these reasons, I have vetoed section 2 of Substitute Senate Bill No. 6118.

With the exception of section 2, Substitute Senate Bill No. 6118 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Locke  
Governor