

6118-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Parks, Fish & Wildlife (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Stevens, Deccio, Mulliken, Roach and Swecker)

Brief Description: Allowing for cougar control pilot programs. Revised for 1st Substitute: Creating a cougar control pilot program.

SB 6118-S - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Provides that the fish and wildlife commission, in cooperation and collaboration with the county legislative authorities of Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, and Okanogan counties, shall adopt rules to establish a three-year pilot program, beginning September 2004, within select game management units of these counties, to pursue or kill cougars with the aid of dogs.

Requires a pursuit season and a kill season with the aid of dogs to be established through the fish and wildlife commission's rule-making process, utilizing local dangerous wildlife task teams comprised of the two collaborating authorities. The two collaborating authorities shall also develop a more effective and accurate dangerous wildlife reporting system to ensure a timely response.

Declares that the pilot program's primary goals are to provide for public safety, to protect property, and to assess cougar populations.

Requires any rules adopted by the fish and wildlife commission to establish a pilot project allowing for the pursuit or hunting of cougars with the aid of dogs under this act to ensure that all pursuits or hunts are: (1) Designed to protect public safety or property;

(2) Reflective of the most current cougar population data;

(3) Designed to generate data that is necessary for the department to satisfy the reporting requirements of this act; and

(4) Consistent with any applicable recommendations emerging from research on cougar population dynamics in a multiprey environment conducted by Washington State University's department of natural resource sciences that was funded in whole or in part by the department of fish and wildlife.

Requires that, after the culmination of the pilot project authorized by this act, the department of fish and wildlife must report to the fish and wildlife commission and the appropriate committees of the legislature: (1) Recommendations for the development of a more effective and accurate dangerous wildlife reporting system, a summary of how the pilot project aided the collection of data useful in making future wildlife management decisions, and a recommendation as to whether the pilot project would serve as a model for effective cougar management into the future. The report required by this provision must be completed in collaboration with the counties choosing to participate in the pilot program.

(2) Recommendations for a new and modern cougar management system that focuses on altering the behavior of wild cougars, and not solely on controlling cougar population levels.

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