

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1832

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, March 21, 2005

Title: An act relating to disclosure of cougar incidences.

Brief Description: Requiring the posting of cougar interactions with pets, livestock, or humans.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Blake, Grant, Holmquist, P. Sullivan, Buri, B. Sullivan, Kristiansen, Serben, Linville, McCune, Orcutt, Sump, Condotta, Cox, Walsh, Clements, Roach, Newhouse, Haler and Pearson.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/05, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 3/17/05, 3/21/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Morton, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Vic Moon (786-7469)

Background: Generally, the use of dogs to hunt or pursue cougars is unlawful in Washington. However, there are situations where the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) is authorized to allow the use of dogs to hunt cougars. One such situation is when the Commission determines that there is a public safety need.

The use of dogs to hunt cougars when there is a public safety need must be limited to specific game management units, and may only be allowed after the Commission has determined that there is no practical alternative to the use of dogs. Practical alternatives include seasons for hunting cougars without the aid of dogs, public education, cougar depredation permits, and relocation or euthanasia programs administered by the Fish and Wildlife Department.

The Commission may authorize the use of dogs in a public safety cougar removal effort if the Department believes, based on complaints or observation, that 11 interactions occurred between humans and cougars in a given year. Of those 11 confirmed interactions, at least four resulted in incidents where livestock or pets were killed or injured by the cougar.

If the necessary interactions occur, and no practical alternatives exist, the Department may allow for the use of dogs to take one cougar per 120 square kilometers in rural or undeveloped areas, or one cougar per 430 square kilometers in urban or suburban areas. All public safety cougar removals must occur between December 1 and March 15 in most game management areas.

Summary of Bill: The Department must post the known details of all reported interactions between cougars and humans, pets, and livestock onto their Internet website. The postings

must contain the location and time of the incidents, as well as any known details when livestock are involved.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Public safety and wildlife management will be improved if cougar encounters are posted on a computer internet site.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Rep. Joel Kretz; Chad Henneman, Cattle Producers of Washington; Judy Warnick, Back-Country Horsemen of Washington; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Dale Brinson, Dept of Fish and Wildlife.