

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1501

As of March 22, 2013

Title: An act relating to building upon the existing wildlife interaction program to establish the mechanisms behind an uncapped funding source for implementing the provisions of the Washington wolf conservation and management plan adopted by the fish and wildlife commission in 2011 in a way that does not change the management provisions of the plan.

Brief Description: Building upon the existing wildlife interaction program to establish the mechanisms behind an uncapped funding source for implementing the provisions of the Washington wolf conservation and management plan adopted by the fish and wildlife commission in 2011 in a way that does not change the management provisions of the plan.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Lytton, Kretz and Ryu).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/13, 75-22.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/21/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Role of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Generally. DFW serves as manager of the state's fish and wildlife resources. Among other duties, DFW must protect, perpetuate, and establish the basic rules and regulations governing the harvest of fish and wildlife.

Wildlife Damage Compensation. The Legislature authorized DFW to manage a wildlife damage compensation program that compensates commercial crop owners for damage from elk and deer. The program also compensates commercial livestock owners for damage from cougars, wolves, and bears.

Specifically, a commercial livestock owner may receive compensation for cattle, sheep, and horses injured or killed by bears, wolves, or cougars. DFW may only pay claims:

- using amounts specifically appropriated for this purpose; and
- up to statutorily specified amounts per animal, which is currently \$200 per sheep and \$1,500 per head of cattle or per horse.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Under the livestock damage compensation program, commercial livestock include cattle, sheep, and horses held or raised by a person for sale.

Summary of Bill: Establishes an Annual Wildlife Account-Based Funding Mechanism for Livestock Damage Caused by Wolves. Authorizes DFW to pay not more than \$50,000 per year from the state Wildlife Account for claims and assessment costs for injury to or the loss of livestock caused by wolves. DFW may also accept and spend funds from other sources to address damage to livestock or other property. Any unspent amounts of the \$50,000 at the end of the fiscal year are transferred to a the newly created Wolf Interaction Conflict Account (Account).

Creates a Washington Wolves Special License Plate. The Washington wolves special license plate is established. The initial fee for the plate is \$40, and a \$30 fee is charged upon renewal. After payment of administrative costs for the Department of Licensing, plate revenues must be deposited in the newly created Account and dedicated to preventative wolf management efforts.

Establishes the Account. The Account is established as a non-appropriated account and may be used for the mitigation, prevention, assessment, and payments of livestock losses. The Account receives unspent annual funds for livestock damage compensation and revenues from the Washington wolves special license plate, and may also hold grants, gifts, or donations. Funds from the Washington wolves special license plate must be used for preventative wolf management efforts.

DFW must maintain a list of claims submitted for livestock damage caused by wolves, organized chronologically based on the date the wolf predation is confirmed. DFW must pay claims in the order they appear on the list as funding becomes available through the Account, annual Wildlife Account funding, or other sources. This includes authority and direction to pay claims for livestock damage that occurred in previous biennia.

Additionally, the existing statutory cap on compensation per livestock animal is removed when the depredation is caused by a wolf, setting the value for these animals as the market value of the livestock.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill provides a mechanism with which both the compensation and prevention issue of wolf management planning in Washington State is addressed. Unspent dollars rolled into a dedicated account will provide a funding source that will be needed to support wolf recovery by producers.

CON: This bill addresses the funding aspect of the wolf management planning, where the issue needs to address both funding and policy components together.

OTHER: This bill provides necessary means for additional funding. While a non-appropriated account is appropriate to address wolf damage claims and assessments, legislative oversight is needed over the use of funds by DFW for wolf management. In addition, the title of this bill may limit the Legislature's ability to make wolf management policy changes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Lytton, prime sponsor; Jack Field, WA Cattlemen's Assn.; Diane Gallegos, Wolf Haven International; David Ware, DFW; Carey Morris, Humane Society of the United States.

CON: Wes McCart, Stevens County Commissioner.

OTHER: Tom Davis, WA Farm Bureau.