
Appropriations Committee

HB 2891

Brief Description: Regarding payments to counties in lieu of property taxes by the department of fish and wildlife.

Sponsors: Representative Haler.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to make payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) to eligible counties at current open space rates, rather than rates equivalent to 2009 payments.
- Removes the requirement that counties receiving the WDFW PILT remit the funding the county collects from fish and wildlife code violations to the state.

Hearing Date: 2/1/16

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Background:

As a state agency, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is exempt from paying property taxes on lands that it owns. However, the WDFW does provide payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) to counties for WDFW-owned lands used for wildlife habitat and public recreation. Counties must choose to receive PILT from the WDFW. If a county chooses to receive PILT, the county can no longer keep the fines they collect from fish and wildlife code violations, and those fines are instead deposited into the State General Fund.

Counties that receive PILT can choose to be paid either at a rate equivalent to taxes on open space land, or the greater of 70 cents per acre per year, or the amount of PILT paid in 1984. The WDFW is also required to pay counties that elect to receive PILT an amount for the control of noxious weeds equal to that which would be paid under private ownership.

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.

In the 2012 Supplemental State Omnibus Appropriations Act, the PILT rates were amended to be equivalent to the rates paid to each county in 2009. This amendment was continued in the 2013-15 and 2015-17 state omnibus appropriations acts.

Summary of Bill:

Several restrictions on the WDFW PILT are removed, with the result that all eligible counties will receive PILT at current open space rates, and there counties are no longer required to remit fines from fish and wildlife code violations to the state.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on August 1, 2016.