

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5204

As Passed Senate, March 16, 2003

Title: An act relating to enhancing watchable wildlife activities.

Brief Description: Providing opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Parks, Fish & Wildlife (originally sponsored by Senators Oke, Doumit, T. Sheldon, Jacobsen, Swecker, Kohl-Welles and Esser; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Parks, Fish & Wildlife: 2/24/03, 3/3/03 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/16/03, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON PARKS, FISH & WILDLIFE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5204 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Oke, Chair; Sheahan, Vice Chair; Doumit, Esser, Jacobsen, Morton, Spanel and Swecker.

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7437)

Background: Wildlife viewing is rated as the number one outdoor activity in the United States. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, almost \$1 billion was spent on wildlife viewing in Washington State in 2001.

A vehicle use permit is required to use Department of Fish and Wildlife lands and access areas. The permit may be purchased separately for \$10, or is provided at no charge with any hunting and fishing license. A person may also choose to make contributions to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for the sound stewardship of fish and wildlife. Contributors are known as "conservation patrons" and receive the vehicle use permit at no charge.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Fish and Wildlife may sell watchable wildlife decals at a cost determined by the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Proceeds from the sale of the decal are used to support watchable wildlife activities of the department, including building infrastructure to serve wildlife viewers and assisting local communities in developing events, tours, trails, and brochures.

A person may contribute more than the cost of the watchable wildlife decal. A vehicle use permit is issued with every watchable wildlife decal at no charge.

Authority for the department to accept general contributions from conservation patrons is deleted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This provides an opportunity for non-fishing and non-hunting constituencies to contribute to WDFW. Watchable wildlife programs can provide economic vitality and increased tourism in rural areas.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Steve Pozzanghera, WDFW; Nina Carter, Audubon.