

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1478

FULL VETO

Brief Description: Feeding wildlife during severe winter weather.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Clements, Buck, Huff, Lisk, Mulliken, McDonald, Honeyford, Sehlin, McMorris, Sump, Sheldon, Parlette, Skinner, Chandler, Kessler, Hatfield and Grant).

House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Parks
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DF&W) is directed by law to work closely with landowners suffering game damage problems to control damage without killing the animals when practical.

During winter conditions, the DF&W has established feeding stations for deer and elk in areas of limited winter range and where habitat has been depleted because of forest and wild land fires. If animals are not fed they may pose a risk to crops and private property and become a traffic hazard as they forage for food.

During the winter of 1996-97, an early snowfall and more severe winter conditions than normal caused the DF&W to feed more animals for a longer period of time than in other years. Typically the DF&W allots approximately \$65,000 for emergency winter feeding in a biennium.

The department issues a number of different licenses. The fees for these various licenses are set in statute.

Summary: The Legislature recognizes it is in the public interest to feed deer and elk on an emergency basis during episodes of severe winter weather given such animals are at risk of starvation and may be driven to forage on private property, damaging crops and other vegetation.

For the winter of 1997-98, the DF&W is directed to work with hunters and other interested parties to develop and implement an emergency winter feeding funding plan. The plan must raise at least \$1 million dollars. The department may use a number of mechanisms to raise money including increased fees, the sale of surplus property, and donations. Under the plan, fees may not constitute more than 50

percent of total moneys raised. Moneys raised under the plan are to be deposited into the state wildlife fund and may only be used for emergency winter feeding. The plan expires on July 1, 1998, unless approved by the Legislature to continue.

Until December 31, 1998, the department may charge an additional fee for certain licenses to implement the emergency winter feeding funding plan.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 85 13

Senate 35 0