

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SSB 5001

Title: An act relating to hunting cougar.

Brief Description: Authorizing hunting of cougar with the aid of dogs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Deccio, Honeyford, T. Sheldon, Swecker, Hargrove, Rossi, Hochstatter, Oke and Rasmussen).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Meeting Date: March 31, 1999.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: Josh Weiss, Counsel (786-7129)

Background: Prior to 1996 the Department of Fish and Wildlife allowed hunters to use bait in attracting black bear and to use dogs in hunting both black bear and cougar. The department regulated these activities through administrative rule, under its authority to implement reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on hunting activities. These regulations included limitations on type and placement of bait, as well as a limitations on use of dogs.

In the general election of November 5, 1996, 63 percent of the voters in Washington approved Initiative 655, which banned the use of bait to attract black bears and the use of hounds to hunt bear, cougar, bobcat, or lynx. These provisions became effective December 5, 1996, and were codified at RCW 77.16.360.

Several other western states including Oregon, Colorado, and California have either banned or heavily regulated the use of dogs and bait to hunt black bear and cougar.

Summary of Bill: The provision of Initiative 655 that prohibits the hunting of cougar with dogs is repealed. The Fish and Wildlife Commission retains the authority to regulate the time, place, and manner for cougar hunting. The commission may authorize cougar hunting with dogs, but is not required to allow it. The department must develop and disseminate information on proper methods of dealing with dangerous wildlife.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Rulemaking Authority: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Passed Senate: 2/12/99, 33-14.

