

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5001

C 248 L 00

Synopsis as Enacted

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).

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation
House Committee on Natural Resources

Background: A prohibition on the hunting of cougar with dogs was approved by the voters with the passage of Initiative 655 on November 5, 1996. Currently, the Fish and Wildlife Commission is authorized to allow hunters to harvest cougar without the use of dogs.

Since the initiative was enacted, cougar populations, cougar sightings and incidents of cougar damage to livestock and pets have increased. Cougars have also attacked humans since the passage of the initiative.

Hunting cougar without the aid of dogs is difficult due to the cougar's secretive nature. Prior to the prohibition of cougar hunting with dogs, over 90 percent of the harvest of cougar was with the aid of dogs.

Summary: The provision of Initiative 655 that prohibits the hunting of cougar with dogs is repealed. The Fish and Wildlife Commission shall allow cougar hunting with dogs only if hunting is conducted within selected areas of game management units, no other practical alternative exists, specific public safety needs must be addressed, the department adopts rules regulating cougar hunting with dogs, and confirmed cougar/human safety incidents or depredations have occurred.

The director may not authorize removal of black bear, cougar, bobcat or lynx for scientific purposes. Cougar, black bear or bobcat may be killed in order to protect threatened or endangered species.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	31	13
House	62	36 (House amended)
Senate	35	10 (Senate concurred)

Effective: March 31, 2000