

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5011

As Passed House - Amended:

April 9, 2003

Title: An act relating to promoting wildlife viewing.

Brief Description: Promoting wildlife viewing.

Sponsors: By Senators Jacobsen, Winsley and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks: 3/21/03, 3/28/03 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/9/03, 92-0.

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended by House)

- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development to host a conference on promoting wildlife viewing tourism.
- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife to manage wildlife programs in a manner that provides for wildlife viewing opportunities and supports wildlife viewing tourism without impairing the state's wildlife resources.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cooper, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Hatfield, O'Brien, Pearson and Upthegrove.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) manages both the game and non-game wildlife species that exist in Washington. Non-game species are those wildlife species that are not hunted or trapped, and include Grizzly Bears, songbirds, butterflies, and

frogs. The DFW maintains a wildlife diversity division that manages non-game wildlife species, and promotes what is often referred to as "Watchable Wildlife."

Each person purchasing or renewing a personalized Washington license plate is charged a fee of \$30. Revenue generated from this fee is dedicated to the preservation of non-game species, and the management of non-consumptive wildlife resources.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Wildlife Viewing Conference

The DFW and the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development are directed to work with local governments and other interest groups to co-host a working conference on promoting wildlife viewing tourism during the calendar year 2003. The conference's objective is to adopt a strategic plan and specific implementing actions to promote wildlife viewing tourism in Washington. The promoted tourism must provide sustainable economic development in the state's rural areas while maintaining the state's wildlife diversity.

Topics that the two affected departments are asked to address include:

- Strategies to increase revenue to communities with wildlife viewing resources;
- Strengthening the wildlife tourism elements of community partnerships;
- Providing leadership and services by state agencies to assist local communities with wildlife viewing assessments and marketing;
- Developing proposals to increase state funding to local communities for the development of wildlife viewing opportunities; and
- Promoting wildlife viewing as an element of the Lewis and Clark bicentennial.

A summary of conference proceedings and proposals for legislative funding must be submitted to the Legislature by December 15, 2003.

On-Going Agency Directions

The DFW is directed to manage wildlife programs in a manner that provides for wildlife viewing opportunities and supports wildlife viewing tourism without impairing the state's wildlife resources.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Bird watching is the fastest growing hobby in America, and it provides economic development for rural communities. A coordinated state response could help maximize those economic benefits. Other states have seen millions of dollars of positive financial impacts due to wildlife watching festivals, and Washington should work to increase its opportunities.

Lands are set aside for hunting, but may go unused when it is not hunting season. Those lands could be enjoyed the rest of the year by bird watchers, which would generate economic activity and jobs in the local regions.

The Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Community, Trade, and Economic Development should improve their working relationships to maximize economic development.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Senator Jacobsen, prime sponsor; and Steve Pozzanghera, Department of Fish and Wildlife.