

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1512

C 385 L 03

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Allowing special hunts to reduce crop damage caused by wildlife.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Fisheries, Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Cox, Fromhold, Sump, Schoesler, Hatfield, Ahern, Clements and Armstrong).

House Committee on Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Senate Committee on Parks, Fish & Wildlife

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is instructed to work closely with landowners to find non-lethal solutions to problem wildlife. However, if such efforts are not practical, the Department is authorized to increase the harvest of damage-causing animals during the hunting season. The Department also has the discretionary authority to conduct special hunts in problem areas as a result of recurring complaints regarding property being damaged by wildlife.

In addition to special hunts, the owner or tenant of real property being damaged by wildlife is authorized to trap or kill problem wildlife that is causing damage to crops. However, that permission does not extend to endangered or threatened species, or to deer and elk. Problem deer and elk may only be killed with a take permit issued by the Department, unless the situation is an emergency and the Department has given the landowner verbal permission to harvest the deer or elk. On cattle ranching land, the owner may only declare an emergency if the Department does not respond within 48 hours of notification. Even if an emergency situation exists, the owners of cattle ranching land may not kill the problem wildlife if they did not make the land available for public hunting during the previous hunting season.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) is authorized to conduct special hunts in areas where game populations exist at a level that damages property or over-utilizes the habitat. The Commission's authority includes the ability to identify the number and sex of animals that are allowed to be taken. The Director of the Department is required to determine a selection system for the hunters allowed to participate in a special season that ensures a random selection.

Summary:

Special Hunts

The Commission is directed to authorize the issuance of either one or two antlerless permits per hunter for special hunts to be conducted in areas where the Department, or its designee, has confirmed six incidents of agricultural and horticultural crop damage caused by deer or elk. Complaints must be received from the owner or tenant of real property, or from several owners or tenants in the same locale.

As an alternative to hunting, the Department must work with affected entities to relocate deer and elk when it is needed to augment populations.

Hunter Selection

The Department is required to maintain a list of persons holding valid wildlife hunting licenses, arranged by county of residence, who are available to hunt deer or elk causing damage to crops. The Department must update the list at least annually. When contacting people to help control game damage to crops, the Department must use the list and must make all reasonable efforts to contact a resident of the county where the activity will occur before contacting a resident of a different county. The names on the list must be randomized in order to provide a fair distribution of the hunting opportunities. Hunters participating in these hunts must report their kills to the Department, and the information provided must be included in a summary of wildlife harvested that is available to the public.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 94 0
Senate 46 3 (Senate amended)
House 97 0 (House concurred)

Effective: July 27, 2003