

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5006

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to nonconsumptive wildlife activities.

Brief Description: Allowing nonconsumptive wildlife activities on public lands.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Energy & Water (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen and Haugen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/21/03, 4/1/03 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to make all lands leased for grazing or agricultural activities open and available for nonconsumptive wildlife activities.
- Directs the Board of Natural Resources to define the term "nonconsumptive wildlife activities."
- Adds nonconsumptive wildlife activities to the list of multiple uses that may occur on state-owned lands.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hunt, McDermott and Quall.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Orcutt and Sump.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the express authority to lease lands for agricultural purposes. Any agricultural lease offered by the DNR must contain provisions that require the lessee to allow hunting and fishing on the land. The lessee may post their land as closed for hunting and fishing, after receiving permission from the DNR, if there is a fire risk present, or if the recreational activity would cause damage to crops, to improvements to the land, to livestock, to the general public, or to the actual lessee.

In addition to the required agricultural lease provisions, the DNR is instructed to implement a multiple-use management concept on all state-owned lands. Multiple uses must be allowed when they are in the best interest of the state and the general welfare of its citizens. However, a multiple use may not be inconsistent with the trust provisions of the land involved. Multiple uses may include recreation, educational and scientific studies, experimental programs, special events, hunting and fishing, maintenance of scenic areas and historical sites, watershed protection, public rights of way, and greenbelt areas. A multiple use that is not compatible with the DNR financial obligations to the trusts may only be allowed if compensation is provided.

Summary of Bill:

The DNR is required to make all lands leased for grazing or agricultural activities open and available for nonconsumptive wildlife activities, as that term is defined by the Board of Natural Resources. Leased lands may be closed to nonconsumptive wildlife recreation under the same conditions that allow for hunting and fishing closures. The leased land can also be closed to hunting, fishing, and nonconsumptive wildlife activities if keeping the land open could endanger the person accessing the land.

Nonconsumptive wildlife activities is added to the list of multiple uses that may occur on state forests.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Agricultural areas could be used for bird watching, which provides economic stimulus to rural economies. Watchable wildlife is the fastest growing eco-tourism segment in the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Heath Packard, Audubon Washington.