

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1756

C 178 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing one additional hound hunting cougar season.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Upthegrove, B. Sullivan, Blake, Takko and VanDeWege).

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation

Background:

In 2004 the Legislature directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to adopt rules that establish a hunting season for cougars that allows the use of dogs. The seasons are limited to a three-year pilot program located only in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, and Okanogan counties, and may only occur within identified game management areas. The goal of the pilot program is to provide for public safety, property protection, and cougar population assessments.

In establishing the seasons, the Commission was required to cooperate and collaborate with the legislative authorities of the impacted counties. This coordination took the form of local dangerous wildlife task teams that were composed of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the local county. The task teams were also directed to develop a more effective and accurate dangerous wildlife reporting system.

To date, two pilot cougar seasons have been authorized and carried out. The final report by the WDFW on the success of the pilot program is scheduled to be released after the third and final season. The report should be available after the 2007 legislative session, but before the end of the 2008 legislative session.

Summary:

The WDFW is authorized to allow one additional season for pursuing or hunting cougars with the aid of dogs. The season is intended to occur in the time between the scheduled end of the cougar hunting pilot project and the commencement of the legislative session following the WDFW's report based on the findings of the pilot program.

The legislative authority of any county that is not included in the cougar hunting pilot project may request the Commission to include its county in the fourth and final year of the pilot project if the legislative authority adopts a resolution requesting inclusion, documents the need to participate by identifying the number of cougar interactions within that county, develops and implements an education program to inform about nonlethal cougar management

methods, and demonstrates that the existing cougar management tools for that county are insufficient.

The additional pilot season is not intended to be used as part of the study reported to the Legislature later this year.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0
Senate	41	8

Effective: July 22, 2007