

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6230

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, January 24, 2008

Title: An act relating to watchable wildlife.

Brief Description: Regarding watchable wildlife.

Sponsors: Senator Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/17/08, 1/24/08 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6230 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Rockefeller, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: In accordance with statute, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) sells watchable wildlife decals (decals). The Legislature allows DFW to set the decal fee, which is currently 28 dollars. DFW must deposit proceeds from decal sales into the Wildlife Account, and may only use such proceeds for watchable wildlife activities and to market the decal. Persons who purchase a decal also receive a vehicle-use permit allowing vehicular access to DFW land.

By statute, watchable wildlife activities include such activities as: initiating partnerships with communities to develop watchable wildlife projects; building infrastructure to serve wildlife viewers; developing wildlife watching corridors, maps, and trails; and providing support to communities seeking to develop watchable wildlife attractions and events.

According to a 2004 DFW report, 47 percent of Washington's residents participated in wildlife watching in 2001. That report also found that tourism based on wildlife viewing generates over one billion dollars for Washington's economy per year.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): DFW, under the authority of the Director, must carry out a watchable raffle pilot project (pilot project) until December 2010.

Under the pilot project, DFW must select raffle winners from the pool of decal holders. Raffle winners receive a wildlife viewing tour on DFW owned or managed lands. The tour should

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provide participants with a desirable, high quality, and rare wildlife viewing experience. The pilot project must consist of no fewer than three raffles and associated tours.

DFW must seek to publicize the raffles and tours to increase public awareness of DFW's watchable wildlife program and decals. During the pilot project, DFW may use other creative measures in an effort to increase the number of people who voluntarily purchase decals.

DFW must provide a report to the Legislature on the pilot project by December 1, 2010.

Watchable wildlife raffles conducted under the pilot project are included within the current exemption from gambling regulations for DFW big game and turkey raffles.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Specifies that the pilot project be carried out under the authority of the Director of DFW. Specifies that DFW may work cooperatively with nongovernmental entities and individuals when providing tours under the pilot project. Includes watchable wildlife raffles conducted under the pilot project within the current exemption from gambling regulations for DFW authorized big game and turkey raffles.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Washington is a premier watchable wildlife destination, which provides much revenue for the state's economy. Thus, there is room for the DFW watchable wildlife program to expand. DFW has ideas for the types of tours it could provide under this pilot project with the assistance of local experts. Volunteers at the local level are interested in helping with this program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Steve Pozzanghera, DFW; Heath Packard, Audubon.