

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6622

As of January 27, 2010

Title: An act relating to mitigating damage to crops from migratory waterfowl.

Brief Description: Mitigating damage to crops caused by migrating waterfowl.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, Morton and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/27/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: In 2009 the Legislature passed HB 1778, which made changes to the state program that provides compensation for deer and elk damage to crops. These changes take effect July 1, 2010. Under the new provisions, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is required, subject to funding limits, to compensate owners of:

- commercial crops damaged by deer or elk; and
- commercial livestock that are killed or significantly injured by bears, cougars, or wolves.

Generally, each individual claim by a crop or livestock owner is eligible to be paid the value of the lost crop up to a maximum of \$10,000. For livestock, the compensation is \$200 for each lost sheep and \$1,500 for each lost head of cattle or horse. Total compensation for the owners of commercial crops damaged by deer and elk generally may not exceed \$120,000 from the wildlife account and \$30,000 from the general fund per year. Total compensation for the owners of commercial livestock may not exceed the amounts specifically appropriated for the purpose.

Property owners may not receive compensation from DFW if they have insurance that provides compensation for the crop loss. Also, they must first exhaust any available compensation offers from non-profit organizations and utilize all applicable legal and practicable self-help preventative measures. In addition, generally owners of commercial crops may only receive cash compensation if they have an annual gross sales or harvest value figure of at least \$10,000. DFW must adopt rules to implement the 2009 statutory changes.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: Adds crop damage caused by migratory waterfowl to the types of damage eligible for compensation by DFW.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2010.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2010.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Migratory birds, particularly snow geese, are having an impact on farmers. They need assistance from DFW to compensate them or help address these growing populations in other ways.

OTHER: DFW works cooperatively with the federal government to manage migratory birds, and recognizes increasing populations are impacting farmers. DFW is in the process of updating its wildlife damage program by rule as directed by the Legislature, and this proposal would severely impact the funding of this already strained program. DFW would like to work to find local solutions in the affected areas.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Haugen, prime sponsor.

OTHER: Steve Pozzanghera, DFW.