

SB 5062 - DIGEST

Finds that: (1) Nature-based tourism is the fastest growing outdoor activity and the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. Tourism activities relating to watchable wildlife contribute almost one and one-half billion dollars to Washington state's economy per year, and it is primarily the rural areas of the state in which these activities occur;

(2) There is general agreement that owners of working farms and forest lands provide a significant portion of the key areas for the wildlife which in turn attract the nature-based tourists;

(3) The purchase of a watchable wildlife decal currently offers a valuable opportunity for individuals to voluntarily contribute to the enhancement of the habitat, infrastructure, trails, corridors, and communities that provide wildlife viewing opportunities in this state; and

(4) Additional investments in the department of fish and wildlife's watchable wildlife program are needed; such investments will increase wildlife viewing and other recreational opportunities in the state and benefit Washington's wildlife and rural communities.

Declares an intent to enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in Washington by providing additional tools and resources to the state's watchable wildlife program and landowners who provide the wildlife habitat that supports nature-based tourism.

Directs the department of fish and wildlife to: (1) Under the authority of the director of the department carry out a watchable wildlife raffle pilot project;

(2) Provide raffle winners with a wildlife viewing tour on department owned or managed lands;

(3) Seek to publicize the raffles and tours, including the tour destinations, to increase public awareness of the department's watchable wildlife program, watchable wildlife decals, and the pilot project; and

(4) Provide the appropriate committees of the legislature with a brief summary of the pilot project and relevant policy recommendations, if any, by December 1, 2011.

Encourages the department of fish and wildlife to use other creative measures to increase the number of individuals who voluntarily purchase watchable wildlife decals.

Expires the watchable wildlife raffle pilot project on January 1, 2012.