
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1219

Brief Description: Concerning large wild carnivore conflict management.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz, Lytton, Klippert, Stanford, Orcutt, Blake, Wilcox, Warnick, Nealey, Buys, Shea and Ryu; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds the gray wolf to the list of big game species.
- Removes the condition that a livestock owner must raise livestock for sale in order to qualify for wildlife damage compensation.
- Allows the State Wildlife Account to be used for compensating the owners of livestock for damage caused by wild carnivores.
- Creates a special wolf license plate to help fund wolf management.

Hearing Date: 2/5/13

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Wildlife Damage Compensation.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is directed to, subject to funding limits, monetarily compensate the owners of commercial crops damaged by deer or elk and the owners of commercial livestock that are killed or significantly injured by bears, cougars, or wolves. Each individual claim by a crop or livestock owner is eligible to be paid the value of the lost crop less any payments received by a non-profit organization 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.

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.

Total compensation for the owners of commercial crops generally may not exceed \$150,000 per year, and total compensation for the owners of commercial livestock may not exceed the amounts specifically appropriated for the purpose. To date, no funding has been provided for compensation to the owners of commercial livestock.

The owners of property that does not qualify as commercial crops or livestock may still apply to the WDFW for compensation for damage caused by mammals or birds. However, unlike compensation for crops and livestock, the WDFW is not required to provide compensation, and any compensation provided may not be in the form of monetary payments. Compensation for this class of damage must take the form of materials or services.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has, pursuant to legislative direction, identified criteria that determines whether damage to property qualifies for compensation. Different criteria may apply to mandatory compensation claims and discretionary claims. For mandatory commercial crop and livestock claims, the criteria must provide for a minimum economic loss. The minimum loss must be set to at least \$500.

Property owners may not receive compensation from the WDFW 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. Self-help measures include non-lethal methods of damage prevention and materials and services provided by the WDFW.

Big Game Designation.

There are 11 species of wildlife that are designated as "big game". These species include most wild ungulates, cougars, and bears. There are specific penalties, responsibilities, and prohibitions that apply only to big game species. For instance, there are enhanced penalties for wildlife-related crimes that involve big game species and, in the case of violations involving multiple individual animals, only species considered big game or endangered may be prosecuted as separate offenses for each animal taken.

Summary of Bill:

Wildlife Damage Compensation.

The WDFW is authorized to spend up to \$50,000 per fiscal year from the State Wildlife Account to pay claims and assessment costs for injuries and losses to commercial livestock from bears, wolves, and cougars. This authority is additive to the WDFW's authority to use State Wildlife Account funding for ungulate damage to crops. Related to this, the condition that a livestock owner must raise livestock for sale in order to qualify for wildlife damage compensation is removed. Any owner of cattle, sheep, or horses may qualify for compensation from losses caused by bears, cougars, or wolves.

The Commission is provided with specific rulemaking authority that allows it to set limits and conditions for expenditures on claims and assessments for wildlife damage to crops, livestock, other property, and mitigating actions.

Big Game Designation.

The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) is added to the list of species that are considered to be big game. Statutes establishing penalties, responsibilities, and prohibitions exclusive to big game species apply to the gray wolf by reference to the new definition.

Special License Plate.

A special license plate is created that recognizes the wolf population of Washington and the special management needs of wolves. The plate must display a symbol or artwork depicting a wolf. The cost of the special plate would be an annual charge of \$40. The Department of Licensing must, after deducting administrative costs, provide the remainder of all revenue for these plates to the WDFW to be used for the management of wolves. However, monies collected through the sale of the special plates are not permitted to be used for lethal wolf management.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. Sections 6 through 10 of the bill, relating to a special wolf license plates, take effect on January 1, 2014.