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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 1501**

**Brief Description:** Building upon the existing wildlife interaction program to establish the mechanisms behind an uncapped funding source for implementing the provisions of the Washington wolf conservation and management plan adopted by the fish and wildlife commission in 2011 in a way that does not change the management provisions of the plan.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Lytton, Kretz and Ryu.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows the State Wildlife Account to be used for compensating the owners of livestock for damage caused by wild carnivores.
- Creates a new account to be used for the mitigation, prevention, assessment, and payment of claims for livestock losses due to wolf predation.
- Allows the owners of livestock injured or killed by wolves to receive compensation at the market value of the animal instead of at a set price.
- Creates a special wolf license plate to help fund preventative wolf management efforts.

**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

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*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.*

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.

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.

### **Summary of Bill:**

#### 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 preventative wolf management efforts.

#### 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. The WDFW must transfer any portions of the authorized \$50,000 that are unspent at the end of any biennium to the Wolf Interaction Conflict Account (Account).

The Account is created as an unappropriated account. In addition to the transfer of any unspent State Wildlife Account money that was appropriated for paying wolf predation claims, the Account may also receive grants, gifts, donation, legislative appropriations, fund transfers, and the proceeds of the special wolf license plate.

Expenditures from the Account are to be used for the mitigation, prevention, assessment, and payment of claims for livestock losses due to wolf predation. The WDFW must pay wolf compensation claims in the chronological order they were confirmed. Confirmed claims in one fiscal biennium may be paid from the Account in a future biennium. For livestock killed by wolves, the animal-specific compensation limits are removed. Instead, compensation is available in an amount that equals the market value of the animal that was lost.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.