
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2517

Brief Description: Concerning wildlife conflict funding to encourage proactive measures.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Kretz and Buys.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to spend up to \$50,000 from the General Fund to pay compensation claims from losses to livestock due to large carnivore predation.
- Creates a new account from which the WDFW can make compensation payments due to losses of crops or livestock from deer, elk, or large carnivores.
- Requires the State Treasurer to transfer any unspent amounts of money the WDFW is authorized to use for compensation to the new account each year.

Hearing Date: 1/30/14

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

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 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 or animal, less any payments received by a nonprofit organization, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

Funding for the WDFW to provide compensation comes primarily from three separate statutory authorities. For deer and elk damage, the WDFW may pay up to \$120,000 from the Wildlife Account each fiscal year. On top of that authority, the WDFW may use up to an additional \$30 from the General Fund for the same purposes.

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.

In addition, the WDFW may spend up to \$50,000 per fiscal year from the Wildlife Account to pay claims and assessment costs for injuries and losses to commercial livestock from wolves. Any portions of the authorized \$50,000 that are unspent at the end of any biennium must be transferred to the Wolf-Livestock Conflict Account (Wolf Account). Expenditures from the Wolf Account are to be used for the mitigation, 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 Wolf Account in a future biennium.

Summary of Bill:

A new, unappropriated account is created to be managed by the WDFW. The account is called the Wildlife Conflict Account (Conflict Account). The Conflict Account may only be used for the prevention, mitigation, assessment, and payments for injury to, and loss of, property caused by deer, elk, or large carnivores. Like the Wolf Account, the WDFW must pay compensation claims from the Conflict Account in the chronological order they were confirmed, and confirmed claims in one fiscal biennium may be paid from the Conflict Account in a future biennium.

The Conflict Account is primarily funded through fund transfers undertaken by the State Treasurer. If the WDFW has not spent up to its full authority in compensation for deer and elk damage (\$120,000 from the Wildlife Account and \$30,000 from the General Fund) by the end of a fiscal year, the remaining unspent amount must be transferred to the Conflict Account.

The WDFW is also given the authority to spend up to an additional \$50,000 each fiscal year from the General Fund for injury and losses caused by large carnivores. Just as with the authorized expenditures for deer and elk damage, any remaining unspent amount must be transferred to the Conflict Account at the end of each fiscal year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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