
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1838

Brief Description: Concerning the baiting of black bears.

Sponsors: Representative MacEwen.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a bait station permit that allows the holder to hunt black bear with the aid of a bait station during a spring damage control hunt in order to assist an owner or tenant of property protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or public safety.

Hearing Date: 2/10/15

Staff: Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

Background:

Generally, it is unlawful to take, hunt, or attract black bear with the aid of bait. Only employees or agents of county, state, or federal agencies while acting in their official capacities may bait black bear for the purpose of protecting livestock, domestic animals, private property, or public safety. A violation is punishable as a gross misdemeanor.

Currently, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) authorizes spring black bear special permit hunts as part of a pilot program to reduce black bear damage to trees. Hunters are allowed one black bear per special permit season. During spring black bear special permit hunts, hunters may use any legal weapon that may be used during the modern firearm, archery, or muzzleloader seasons. Hunters may not use the aid of bait or hounds.

Summary of Bill:

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.

A bait station permit is created that allows the holder to use a black bear bait station during a spring damage control hunt in order to assist an owner or tenant of property protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or public safety. An applicant for a bait station permit is required to already hold a big game hunting license, any necessary transport tags, and a special hunting season permit that allows the holder to hunt for black bear in a spring damage control hunt authorized by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Bait station permits may be purchased from the WDFW's Olympia office and cost \$10. Each individual bait station requires its own permit. The bait station's permit number must be visibly attached to the bait station. Bait station permits are valid for 15 days before the opening day of a spring damage control hunt and expire five days after the end of the spring damage control hunt.

Bait stations may not be constructed or attached in a way that could damage a tree and bait stations are required to be secured so as to be easily removable. Bait stations are required to be a single metal or plastic barrel not larger than 55 gallons, a wooden box, or made from natural materials found at the site. Bait stations must be removed and the area restored as closely as possible to its natural conditions at the conclusion of the hunt if a black bear is taken or no later than five days after the close of the spring damage control hunt, whichever is earlier.

Bait is required to consist of natural or commercially processed meats, vegetables, fruits, or grains. Bait may not contain any metal, plastic, paper, Styrofoam, glass, or any other substance that may harm or injure an animal feeding from the bait station. Further, bait must be free of any commercial wrapper before being placed in the bait container or the area around the bait container, and bait may not include any cooking oil or grease. Additionally, bait may include additives like honey, molasses, jam, jelly, or a similar substance and those substances may be placed in or around the bait station.

Bait stations are required to be located no closer than 50 yards from any natural body of water or natural running stream, creek, or river, at least 100 yards from any public or private traveled road and any hiking, horseback riding, bicycle, or other off-road vehicle use trail, and no closer than 500 yards from any private residence or commercial structure. A private property owner may remove any bait station illegally placed on the private property owner's property.

Hunting with the aid of a bait station without a valid bait station permit in the hunter's name or failing to comply with the requirements related to bait station permits is a violation of the prohibition on taking, hunting, or attracting black bear with the aid of bait.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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