

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5712

As Passed Senate, March 4, 2015

Title: An act relating to addressing certain damage caused by wildlife.

Brief Description: Addressing certain damage caused by wildlife.

Sponsors: Senator Pearson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 2/11/15, 2/19/15 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/04/15, 45-3.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Dansel, Vice Chair; Hatfield, Ranking Minority Member; Chase, Hewitt, McAuliffe and Warnick.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Wildlife Management Authority. DFW serves as manager of the state's fish and wildlife resources. Among other duties, DFW must classify wildlife and establish the basic rules and regulations governing the time, place, manner, and methods used to take fish and wildlife.

Wildlife Damage Compensation Generally. DFW has the ongoing authority to pay up to \$150,000 per year for commercial crop damage caused by deer or elk. DFW also has the ongoing authority to provide up to \$50,000 annually for wolf damage to livestock, and can pay money specifically appropriated by the Legislature to compensate for damage to livestock by bear and cougar.

DFW may offer to provide assistance, including materials and services, to address damage caused by wildlife that is not eligible for compensation.

Summary of Bill: Wildlife Management Authority. DFW may not take any wildlife management action that is likely to result in the increase of a species in an area that has had commercial crop or livestock damage from that species until the Fish and Wildlife Commission makes a finding that:

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- relevant damage claims have been processed and qualified claims were paid; and
- DFW analyzes and implements measures sufficient to ensure the prevention of future commercial crop and livestock damage by that species in that area.

Wildlife Damage Compensation. DFW must maintain lists of commercial crop and livestock claims that have qualified for compensation, and pay those across fiscal years and biennia as funding becomes available.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: There is support for creating a list of damage claims that is extended beyond fiscal years and biennia, as proposed in section 2 of the bill. DFW has rules that requires it to maintain a list, but the statutory guidance in the bill is beneficial. While supportive of the concept, there are some suggestions for improving the bill. The bill helps carry on an important conversation on how to best address the problem wildlife issues that farmers and ranchers across the state are facing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Mick Cope, DFW; Bill Sieverkropp, WA Cattlemen's Assn.; Tom Davis, WA Farm Bureau.