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SENATE BILL 5940

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State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Senators Dansel and Benton

Read first time 02/12/15. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources & Parks.

1 AN ACT Relating to a pilot program for cougar control; adding new  
2 sections to chapter 77.12 RCW; and providing expiration dates.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1)(a) The department, in cooperation and  
5 collaboration with the county legislative authorities of Ferry,  
6 Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, Okanogan, and Klickitat counties,  
7 shall recommend rules to establish a five-year pilot program within  
8 select game management units of these counties, to pursue or kill  
9 cougars with the aid of dogs.

10 (b) Dangerous wildlife task teams must be developed in each  
11 county comprised of representatives from the county and the  
12 department. A pursuit season and a kill season with the aid of dogs  
13 must be established through the commission's rule-making process,  
14 utilizing local dangerous wildlife task teams. The dangerous wildlife  
15 task teams shall also develop a more effective and accurate dangerous  
16 wildlife reporting system to ensure a timely response.

17 (c) The pilot program's primary goals are to provide for public  
18 safety, to protect property, and to assess, conserve, and manage  
19 cougar populations.

1 (2) Rules adopted by the commission to establish a pilot project  
2 allowing for the pursuit or hunting of cougars with the aid of dogs  
3 under this section must ensure that all pursuits or hunts are:

4 (a) Designed to protect public safety or property;

5 (b) Reflective of the most current cougar population data;

6 (c) Designed to generate data that is necessary for the  
7 department to satisfy the reporting requirements of section 3 of this  
8 act; and

9 (d) Consistent with any applicable recommendations emerging from  
10 research on cougar population dynamics in a multiprey environment  
11 funded in whole or in part by the department.

12 (3) The department may authorize five seasons in which cougars  
13 may be pursued or killed with dogs, subject to the other conditions  
14 of the pilot program. The seasons are authorized to aid the  
15 department in the gathering of information necessary to formulate a  
16 recommendation to the legislature regarding whether a permanent  
17 program is warranted and, if so, what constraints, goals, and  
18 objectives should be included in a permanent program.

19 (4) This section expires July 1, 2020.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) A county legislative authority may  
21 request inclusion in the pilot project authorized by section 1 of  
22 this act after taking the following actions:

23 (a) Adopting a resolution that requests inclusion in the pilot  
24 project;

25 (b) Documenting the need to participate in the pilot program by  
26 identifying the number of cougar/human encounters and livestock and  
27 pet depredations;

28 (c) Developing and agreeing to the implementation of an education  
29 program designed to disseminate to landowners and other citizens  
30 information about predator exclusion techniques and devices and other  
31 nonlethal methods of cougar management; and

32 (d) Demonstrating that existing cougar depredation permits,  
33 public safety cougar hunts, or other existing wildlife management  
34 tools have not been sufficient to deal with cougar incidents in the  
35 county.

36 (2) This section expires July 1, 2020.

37 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) By September 1, 2019, the department  
38 must deliver to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, a

1 progress report summarizing the pilot program authorized in section 1  
2 of this act. The report must include information relating to how the  
3 program has been used to assess cougar population levels and protect  
4 public safety and property. The report may also include any  
5 recommendations as to how cougar management policies may be changed  
6 in the future to achieve more effective or efficient management.

7 (2) This section expires July 1, 2020.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Sections 1 through 3 of this act are each  
9 added to chapter 77.12 RCW.

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