

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2126

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to creating a community-based approach to provide assistance with nonlethal management methods to reduce livestock depredations by wolves.

Brief Description: Creating a community-based approach to provide assistance with nonlethal management methods to reduce livestock depredations by wolves.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake and Wilcox).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Appropriations: 2/24/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/17, 98-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/12/17, 49-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Creates the Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management Grant Program and Account (Account) within the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to fund the employment of nonlethal wolf management strategies and tools.
- Creates an advisory board to advise the Director of the WSDA on the expenditure of funds in the Account.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 32 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

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.

Staff: Dan Jones (786-7118).

Background:

Wolf Management.

The gray wolf is classified as an endangered species for all of Washington under state law, and for the western two-thirds of Washington under federal law. A Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Plan) was adopted by the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission in December 2011. The Plan guides recovery and management of gray wolves in Washington.

Conservation Districts.

Conservation districts are governmental subdivisions that provide voluntary services related to conservation and agricultural practices. There are 45 conservation districts in Washington. Conservation district boards consist of five members (three elected and two appointed), at least three of which must be landowners or farm operators.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management Grant (Grant) is created, administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Grant funds must be used for nonlethal deterrence resources, including equipment and tools, in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, or Pend Oreille counties.

An advisory board is created to advise the WSDA on the use of Grant funds and the use of resources funded by the Grants. The advisory board consists of one member each from the Okanogan County, Ferry County, Stevens County, and Pend Oreille County conservation district boards. Advisory board members are appointed, in consultation with the relevant conservation district and legislators, by the Director of the WSDA for two-year terms. Advisory board members must be knowledgeable about wolf depredation and nonlethal wolf management, and may not benefit financially from Grant-funded contracts.

The Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management Account (Account) is created. Grant funds are deposited into the Account, and the Account may only be used to deploy nonlethal wolf deterrence resources. The Account is nonappropriated, and only the Director of the WSDA may authorize expenditures, in consultation with the advisory board. The advisory board may solicit public and private funds for the Grants.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The striking amendment:

- adds language to the legislative intent concerning the time and monetary burden of wolf recolonization on livestock producers;
- adds a definition for "Northeast Washington";
- uses the word "livestock" instead of "cattle" in the name of the grant and account;
- adds "human presence" as an allowable use of the grant funds;

- requires funds to be distributed to nonprofit organizations that have advisory boards with personnel from relevant government agencies, or that are willing to receive assistance from relevant agencies; and
- adds legislative appropriations, private donations, and other private or public sources as funds that may be deposited in the account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The community approach in this bill is good and it would put more deterrence tools and resources on the landscape. Putting the Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management Grant under the Department of Agriculture is appropriate, but the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) still maintains responsibility for wolf management policy in Washington. The bill would be improved by expanding "cattle" to "livestock" and adding the DFW as a technical consultant on the use of preventive tools.

The bill is a good start, and the policy is something that will still be needed 10 or 20 years down the road.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Donny Martorello, Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Arron Scotten.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.