

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2126

As of March 16, 2017

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: Passed House: 3/06/17, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/16/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management grant program to fund nonlethal wolf management strategies and tools.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Wolf Management in Washington State. Gray wolves are currently endangered under federal law in approximately the western two-thirds of the state, with the species having been federally delisted in the eastern one-third in 2011. Wolves are classified under state law as an endangered species throughout the state.

The state's wolf conservation and management plan (wolf plan) was adopted in December 2011. Its stated goals are to:

- restore the wolf population to a self-sustaining size and geographic distribution;
- manage wolf-livestock conflicts to minimize livestock losses while not negatively impacting recovery;
- maintain healthy ungulate populations; and
- develop public understanding of the conservation and management needs of wolves.

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.

Compensation for Wolf-Livestock Damage. In 2013, the Legislature authorized the Department of Fish and Wildlife to pay not more than \$50,000 per year from the state Wildlife account for claims and assessment costs for injury to or the loss of livestock caused by wolves. Any unspent amounts of the \$50,000 at the end of the fiscal year are transferred to the non-appropriated Wolf-Livestock Conflict account.

Summary of Bill: The Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Management grant program is created to fund nonlethal deterrence resource equipment and tools in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties. A non-appropriated account is created to receive and expend program funding, with the Director of the Department of Agriculture (Director) having expenditure authority.

The Department of Agriculture must consult with a four-member advisory board composed of individuals knowledgeable about wolf depredation and with a special interest in nonlethal wolf management techniques. If they qualify under this criteria, one Conservation District Board Member each from Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties must be appointed. Advisory board members serve two-year terms and are appointed by the Director.

Definitions and legislative findings are included.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill appropriately adopts a community based approach that will increase tools available to areas with wolves. This is an example of a positive development in wolf policy discussions, with diverse stakeholders supporting this approach. There are several suggested areas for amendments.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Donny Martorello, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Paula Swedeen, Conservation Northwest.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.