

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2126

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks, March 28, 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, 3/28/17 [DPA-WM].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Hawkins, Vice Chair; Van De Wege, Ranking Minority Member; Fortunato and McCoy.

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;

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.

- 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.

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 Amended Bill: The Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Management grant program is created to fund nonlethal deterrence resources in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties. These deterrence resources include human presence and locally owned and deliberately located tools. The program may provide funding to certain nonprofit collaboratives and individuals that meet specified requirements.

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.

EFFECT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Specifies eligible uses of funds through the grant program including for human presence resources, locally owned equipment and tools, and to certain nonprofit collaborative organizations and individuals receiving technical assistance from agencies.
- Adds a definition, intent language, and makes technical changes.

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 on Engrossed Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* 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.