

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1516

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks, April 2, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing a department of fish and wildlife directed nonlethal program for the purpose of training dogs.

Brief Description: Establishing a department of fish and wildlife directed nonlethal program for the purpose of training dogs.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Dent, Chapman, Kretz, Walsh, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Springer, Pettigrew, Hoff and Shea.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/19, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 3/19/19, 4/02/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission to establish and administer a training program for nonlethal pursuit of black bears, cougars, or bobcats with dogs for the purpose of protecting livestock, domestic animals, private property, or public safety.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Van De Wege, Chair; Salomon, Vice Chair; Warnick, Ranking Member; Honeyford, McCoy, Rolfes and Short.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: With the passage of Initiative 655 in 1996, voters approved a prohibition on hunting bear, cougar, bobcat, and lynx with dogs, with certain exceptions. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (commission) is authorized to allow the use of dogs to hunt or pursue black bear, cougar, bobcat, or lynx if there is a public safety need; to protect livestock, domestic animals, and private property; for scientific purposes; or to protect endangered

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species. In addition, the commission is authorized to allow hunters to harvest bear, cougar, and bobcat without the use of dogs. Lynx are classified as both a state and federal endangered or threatened species and may not be hunted or killed.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) must post the known details of all reported interactions between cougars and humans, pets, and livestock onto their website. In addition, DFW is also required to post all reported predatory wildlife interactions, including grizzly bears, wolves, and cougars, onto their website within ten days of receiving the report.

Summary of Bill: DFW must adopt by rule a process to select persons who may act as agents of the state for the purpose of using dogs to hunt or pursue black bear, cougar, or bobcat to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or for public safety. A requirement for training program applicants must include a criminal background check. The purpose of this program is to provide dog training opportunities using nonlethal pursuit.

The commission's authority to authorize hunting lynx or pursuing lynx with the aid of dogs is removed. A duplicative requirement to post the known details of all reported interactions between cougars and humans, pets, and livestock onto the DFW website is removed.

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: Stakeholders worked together on this bill and used a very inclusive process. Dog owners need to develop skills to be prepared to respond to public safety concerns. The Fish and Wildlife Commission will adopt rules to make the program work, and DFW would monitor the training to ensure that working dogs are available and trained.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Brian Blake, Prime Sponsor; Buddy Woodberry, Working Dogs for Wildlife Conflict Resolution; Paula Swedeen, Director, Conservation Northwest Policy.

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