

Agency: 477 Department of Fish and Wildlife
Decision Package Code/Title: AL Large Carnivore Conflict Management
Budget Period: 2011-13
Budget Level: PL - Performance Level

Recommendation Summary Text:

As the state's human population continues to grow, interactions between wildlife and humans are more frequent, often resulting in damage to property and livestock. This issue is even more pronounced with large carnivores and their interactions with people. The concerns extend beyond property damage to concerns for personal safety. The Legislature directed the Department of Fish and Wildlife to address these growing issues through significant amendments to Chapter 77.36 RCW. Dedicated staff to deal with these management challenges proactively through education and outreach; monitoring carnivore locations, movements, and survival; and responding to incidents quickly and efficiently, is the key to establishing successful outcomes and maintaining healthy, sustainable carnivore populations. Ongoing funding is requested for a program to address management priorities, livestock losses, and public safety concerns related to carnivores in key areas of the state. Funding necessary to support this program would be generated by developing cougar and wolf background license plates to generate revenue of approximately \$150,000 per year beginning in FY13.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures		<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
104-1 State Wildlife Account-State			149,900	149,900
Total Cost			149,900	149,900
Staffing		<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Annual Average</u>
FTEs		.0	1.3	.7
Revenue				
<u>Fund</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
104 State Wildlife Accou	0299 Other Licenses Permi		150,000	150,000
Total Revenue			150,000	150,000

Package Description:

The public is often critical of the Department's efforts to address wildlife conflicts and livestock losses. Response is primarily reactive after complaints are lodged by property owners and the most common response is lethal removal. The 2009 Legislature authorized the Department to significantly change the way wildlife conflicts are addressed, but did not provide funds to compensate livestock operators for losses.

A balanced approach is needed that equitably shares the responsibility between the state and property owners in addressing wildlife interactions. Partnerships need to be developed with public and private entities so property owners have greater options for obtaining assistance. This balanced approach requires landowners to first use practical self-help preventative measures, including materials and services provided by the Department and its partners, to prevent wildlife damage and livestock losses prior to seeking lethal options or compensation.

When lethal removal is necessary, a landowner should have multiple options available for addressing the situation. Depending on the species and situation, the landowner may be responsible for the costs associated with that assistance.

With the financial obligation for assisting landowners coming from special background license plate revenue, the focus of this proposal is to address large carnivores and potential issues they create using dedicated staff. In addition, partnerships would be formed utilizing other public agencies, private sector wildlife control operators, and non-governmental organizations. These entities would be trained and permitted as necessary by the Department to assist property owners with advice, remedial measures, and potentially the removal of problem animals. Outreach efforts for large carnivores have been effectively conducted by some non-governmental organizations for many years, the department plans to partner with them as well.

Implementation of this proposal will depend on the revenue generated from the sales of background license plates on wild carnivores as proposed in the agency request legislation regarding "large wild carnivore conflict management". If the bill passed, staff would be hired and operating by fall of 2012. Landowners in areas where there are chronic problems will be contacted. Agreements for how property damages would be addressed in the coming years will be established. In addition, training modules and outreach materials would be developed to begin training and providing materials to partners to help assist property owners so that sessions could be conducted by winter of 2013 and materials available across the state by spring of 2013.

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Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

The result of having dedicated staff available to quickly and proactively assist property owners will improve relationships with property owners who suffer chronic property damage from wildlife carnivores and increase satisfaction with the service they receive from the department to address their damage problems.

This decision package provides statewide benefit.

Performance Measure Detail

Activity: A038 Provide Sustainable Hunting and Wildlife Viewing Opportunities

Incremental Changes

No measures submitted for package

Is this decision package essential to implement a strategy identified in the agency's strategic plan?

This package directly contributes to the WDFW 2011-2017 Strategic Plan, Goal 3: Use sound business practices, deliver high-quality customer service, Objective A: Maintain high-quality customer service aligned with agency priorities and capacities. This is achieved by engaging stakeholders and other citizens through proactive outreach efforts. Funding this decision package will allow the Department to directly address this strategy.

Does this decision package provide essential support to one of the Governor's priorities?

This decision package is tied to the Governor's priority "Concern For Our Environment" which states "Washington is also home to a rich diversity of fish and wildlife species and the unique habitats upon which they depend." Educating citizens about wildlife and how to live with them in our communities will help to ensure that wildlife is preserved for future generations to enjoy. The Game Management Activity ranked 22 out of 148 Activities in the 2011-13 POG Result Area "Protect Natural Resources and Cultural and Recreational Opportunities".

Does this decision package make key contributions to statewide results? Would it rate as a high priority in the Priorities of Government process?

The decision package contributes to two Priorities of Government (POG) result areas; Improving the quality of Washington's Natural Resources (result Area 8), and Improving Cultural and Recreational Opportunities Throughout the State (result Area 9).

For result area 8, three activities proposed as elements of this decision package appear either as highest priority purchases (90% level) or lower priority purchases (10%); these include providing outreach and education services, providing technical assistance, and conducting surveys of fish, wildlife and habitat. An additional three activities, all variations of managing human and wildlife conflict, specifically related to this package appear within the "Buy Next" listing.

What are the other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

This proposal supports recent legislation (SHB 1778) regarding wildlife interactions. It specifically implements the Legislature's shift in policy that all citizens share the responsibility to address property damage; the reliance should be on proactive, preventative measures; and facilitates livestock owner compensation for losses caused by bears, cougar, and wolves.

By shifting priorities within the Department in 2008, two wildlife conflict specialists were created and stationed in Ellensburg and Yakima to address deer and elk damage to crops. These positions have proven themselves to be very effective with improved response times and landowner satisfaction as well as better management of the elk populations and achieving population objectives.

What alternatives were explored by the agency, and why was this alternative chosen?

A stakeholders group evaluated a variety of funding alternatives and determined that the General Fund was the most equitable because all citizens benefit. However, due to the current budget shortfalls in the General Fund, optional background license plate fees are being recommended as part of this package.

What are the consequences of not funding this package?

In general we are seeing a continual erosion of public support and tolerance for maintaining healthy wildlife populations, especially large carnivores. Livestock operators across the state have expressed concerns about losses from cougar and what is anticipated to occur from wolf re-colonization. Key areas include northeast, southeast, and the Cascade Mountains and Okanogan Highlands. All of these areas are very important to wildlife. Landowners need greater flexibility and support to mitigate and avoid livestock losses in order to increase support for maintaining healthy levels of large carnivores and other wildlife.

If we don't improve our assistance to landowners who experience damage, large carnivore population levels will be managed at lower levels because property owners will not continue to accept the burden of maintaining them. Concerns about large carnivores have increased steadily over the past several years and demands for compensation will increase. Public tolerance will continue to diminish and the pressure to reduce the number of carnivores will increase. The result will be fewer wild animals in this state.

What is the relationship, if any, to the state's capital budget?

The state's capital budget includes a request for non lethal measures for addressing property damage, such as exclusionary fencing, habitat protection, and the purchase of easements to provide forage for wildlife.

What changes would be required to existing statutes, rules, or contracts, in order to implement the change?

None.

Expenditure and revenue calculations and assumptions

Salaries and Benefits:

The expenditures are for adding one dedicated wildlife conflict specialists (Environmental Specialist 3), to assist livestock owners in areas with chronic depredation issues and areas where wolves are re-colonizing the state.

Goods and services:

Standard costs associated with field positions, and materials to supply landowners with hazing materials, repellents, fencing materials,

habitat management, and other proactive measures to avoid property damage are estimated to be \$40,800.

0.3 FTE (Administrative Support) and infrastructure and support costs of 23.51% are included in goods and services totaling \$28,500.

Travel:

Standard travel costs associated with assisting landowners are estimated at \$2,500/yr.

Debt Service:

Costs are included for leases of a vehicle, computer, hazing equipment, and other standard field equipment, totaling \$7,500/yr.

Revenue:

The revenue is based on the sales history of WDFW's wildlife series background plates. It is estimated that 3,750 plates will be sold @ \$40 per plate, which will generate approximately \$150,000 per fiscal year.

Which costs and functions are one-time? Which are ongoing? What are the budget impacts in future biennia?

All costs are ongoing except for one-time cost of color supplies in the amount of \$16,700. However, beginning in FY 14, personal service contracts will be necessary to develop outreach programs and to assist landowners with proactive measures to avoid pet and livestock losses. The costs for these contracts are estimated to be \$57,000 per fiscal year.

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
A Salaries And Wages		50,300	50,300
B Employee Benefits		20,300	20,300
E Goods And Services		69,300	69,300
G Travel		2,500	2,500
P Debt Service		7,500	7,500
Total Objects		149,900	149,900