

Agency: 477 Department of Fish and Wildlife
Decision Package Code/Title: AH Deer and Elk 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, resulting in increased damage to property and livestock. The Legislature directed the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to address these growing issues through significant amendments to Chapter 77.36 RCW. A dedicated Wildlife Conflict Management Program, with staff to deal with these conflicts quickly and efficiently, is the key to successful outcomes and healthy, sustainable wildlife populations. Ongoing funding is requested for a program to address chronic property and livestock damage in the hardest hit areas of the state. Funding necessary to support this program would be generated by increasing the number of hunting permits available for sale, estimated to generate additional Wildlife Fund State revenue of approximately \$450,000 per year.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures		<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
104-1 State Wildlife Account-State			443,000	443,000
Total Cost			443,000	443,000
Staffing		<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Annual Average</u>
FTEs		.0	4.9	2.5
Revenue				
<u>Fund</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
104 State Wildlife Accou	0245 Hunting/Fishing Lic		450,000	450,000
Total Revenue			450,000	450,000

Package Description:

Currently, Fish and Wildlife officers have the primary responsibility for responding to wildlife conflicts across the state. Because enforcement of fish and wildlife laws and responding to public safety issues are the priorities for officers, WDFW is often not very responsive to wildlife conflicts and property damage problems. Response is primarily reactive after complaints are lodged by property owners and the most common response is lethal removal. The 2009 Legislature authorized WDFW to significantly change the way wildlife conflicts are addressed.

With Washington's increasing human population and associated expansion for primary residences and recreational property, maintaining healthy wildlife population levels is more challenging. A significant part of that challenge is addressing increased interactions between humans and wildlife. These interactions can result in significant financial impacts to the affected landowner. Conversely, landowner actions can have significant impacts on the habitat wildlife require to survive.

A balanced approach is needed that equitably shares 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 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 hunting license revenue, this proposal is to address deer and elk problems with dedicated staff. In many cases, population levels of deer and elk are lower than they might be because of the lack of support from landowners. Partnerships will be formed utilizing other public agencies as well as private sector wildlife control operators. These entities will be trained and permitted by WDFW to assist property owners with advice, remedial measures, and removal of problem animals.

Property owners will have more options for addressing conflicts caused by wildlife. Technical information will be more widely available and expanded partners will help assist property owners. In addition, a proactive approach will be implemented with landowners experiencing crop damage caused by deer and elk. They will receive quicker response, have a greater number of options and be able to anticipate and remediate problems quickly.

Staff will be hired and operating by fall of 2012. They will be contacting landowners in areas where there are chronic problems and establishing agreements for how property damages will be addressed. In addition, training modules and outreach materials will be developed to begin training and providing materials to the partners that will assist homeowners. These sessions could be conducted by winter of 2013 and materials made available statewide by spring of 2013.

Name and Phone Number of Subject Matter Expert:

Dave Ware, Game Division Manager, Wildlife Program (360) 902-2509

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

Having dedicated staff available to quickly and proactively assist property owners will improve relationships with property owners who suffer chronic property damage from wildlife, increase satisfaction with the service they receive from the department to address their damage problems, and thereby increase their tolerance for healthy deer and elk populations. The increased tolerance will help achieve population objectives for deer and elk herds in the Blue Mountains, northeast Washington counties, and North Central Washington. These deer and elk populations are below objective which impacts hunting participation and economic benefits to rural communities.

This decision package will specifically benefit Eastern Washington.

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?

The Department of Fish and Wildlife's 2011-2017 Strategic Plan contains a goal, an objective, and a corresponding strategy associated with this decision package. Goal 3 states that the Department will, "Use sound business practices, deliver high-quality customer service". The objective is to "Maintain high-quality customer service aligned with agency priorities and capacities". The strategy is to "Engage stakeholders and other citizens through proactive outreach efforts."

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

The Game Management Activity ranked 22 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?

This decision package request 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.

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

This proposal supports SHB 1778 regarding wildlife interactions. It specifically implements the legislation's shift in policy that all citizens share the responsibility to address property damage; the reliance should be on proactive, preventative measures; and facilitates landowner compensation for commercial crop losses caused by deer and elk.

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 stakeholder 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, user fees are being recommended as part of this package.

What are the consequences of not funding this package?

An erosion of public support and tolerance for maintaining healthy wildlife populations.

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

The 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 three dedicated wildlife conflict specialists (Environmental Specialists 3), one each in Dayton, Colville, and Wenatchee to assist agricultural landowners. These are areas with chronic crop damage issues and areas where deer and elk population levels are below objectives.

In addition, 0.5 FTE (Natural Resource Scientist 4) will provide program oversight and monitoring with the development of partnerships, training curriculum, and technical support information; and 0.5 FTE (Customer Service Specialist 2) to assist constituents and provide support for the program.

Goods and services:

Standard costs associated with filed positions, and materials to supply landowners with hazing materials, repellents, fencing materials, habitat and forage enhancement, fertilizer, and other proactive measures to avoid property damage are estimated to be \$65,700 in goods and services per fiscal year to cover costs associated with the newly implemented program.

0.9 FTE (Administrative Support) and infrastructure and support costs of 23.51% are included in goods and services totaling \$84,300 per year.

Travel:

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

Equipment:

Standard costs are included for leases of three vehicles, computers, hazing equipment, and other standard field equipment, totaling \$3,500/yr.

Revenue:

The revenue calculation relies on increasing the number of multi-season deer and elk permits available for sale to hunters. Multi-season permits are a highly sought after special permit opportunity that allows selected hunters to hunt general archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm seasons, rather than the general hunting season framework which requires hunters to select a single weapon type. Multi-season permits are available by special permit drawing only. Current, there are 2,000 multi-season permits for deer and 700 for elk. Increasing the total multi-season permits by 3,000 will provide funding to the proposed package. The base price for these permits is \$150 each. Therefore, the revenue is estimated at \$450,000 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.

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY 2012</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>Total</u>
A Salaries And Wages		205,200	205,200
B Employee Benefits		81,800	81,800
E Goods And Services		150,000	150,000
G Travel		2,500	2,500
J Capital Outlays		3,500	3,500
Total Objects		443,000	443,000