

## ***Operating Budget Update- For Fish & Wildlife Commission Review***

**Summary:** At the last Commission conference call on August 17, approval of the Department’s operating budget decision packages were held until the Commission could further consider the inclusion of a budget request related to deer and elk conflict management.

### **Background: Deer and Elk Conflict Management Budget Requests**

**History-** The request for funding for a dedicated Wildlife Conflict Management Program has been included in the Department’s budget request to OFM and the Legislature for the past two sessions. The Governor has not included funding for the request in her budget proposal both times the Department requested funding for this purpose. Since the Governor’s budget did not include the funding, the Legislature never considered the Department’s request.

The budget requests have been in the range of \$400,000 per year, to support dedicated staff that would directly assist property owners with measures to mitigate damages to crops caused by deer and elk as well as form partnerships with private animal control companies and wildlife control operators licensed by WDFW and trained to assist property owners with advice, preventative measures, and hazing of problem animals. Revenue to support the Program was intended to come from the sale of additional multi-season deer and elk hunting permits. This revenue is deposited into the non-restricted portion of the Wildlife Account that is currently experiencing a structural deficit due to fund shifts by the Legislature, and severe state general fund reductions over the past few years.

Our OFM budget analyst explained that the requests were not funded in the Governor’s budget because of concern about the position of the Wildlife Account due primarily to the economic downturn, and that the sales of multi-season permits were one of the only tools that the Department could use internally to improve the fund balance in the Account.

### ***Revenue from Multi-Season Permits-***

WDFW has increased the opportunity to purchase big game multi-season deer and elk permits substantially over the past two seasons: During the 2011 Big Game Hunting Season 4,000 deer and 850 elk permits were made available, and during the 2012 Big Game Hunting Season 8,500 Deer and 1,000 elk permits were made available. This increase in availability of permits has increased sales revenue between License Year (LY) 11 and LY 12 by \$201,300 and sales will continue until the first of September, 2012.

Description	LY 11	LY 12 (Through August 27, 2012)		Gain in Revenue
	Qty-Sold	Qty-Sold	Gain in Sales Fee	
TAG: Multi-Season Deer	1,974	3,121	1,147 \$165	\$189,255
TAG: Multi-Season Deer	647	720	73 \$165	\$12,045
			Total:	\$201,300

LY 11 = April 1, 2011-March 31, 2012    LY 12 = April 1, 2012-March 31 2013

## ***Options for Consideration-***

### **Option 1: Move forward with a third request for funding**

The Wildlife Program has resubmitted a Wildlife Conflict decision package that is smaller than in previous years. The current request is for \$300,000 per fiscal year, to hire two full time staff, and a part-time support staff position. Current revenue projections for the sales of multi-season permits do not fully support this request. However, since the availability multi-season permits have already been increased last license year, and there is no authority from the Legislature to spend revenue yet, there will be three fiscal years of revenue to support the Wildlife Conflict Program request (revenue from FY12, FY 13, and FY 14). Furthermore, we assume that we haven't fully realized the impact of the most recent increase in sales, and the Wildlife Program plans on additional marketing to drive more sales in the future. If these efforts are unable to support the proposed program there is an option to use revenue from another account to serve as a backup if needed.

Still, the overall Wildlife Account fund balance will be a concern to OFM, and possibly the Legislature. Most likely, this package will not be funded in the Governor's budget for the same reasons that the package has not been supported in the past.

### **Option 2: Wait for another year**

Under this option, we wait for another year to get a better idea of the revenue trends from the increased availability of multi-season permits. Additionally, the overall balance in the Wildlife Account may improve enough to alleviate concerns that have caused OFM to not fund this request in the past. We would potentially be able to make a stronger case that the increased revenue from the sales of multi-season permits fully supports the addition of a new program supported by the Wildlife Account.

#### **Staff Contact:**

Owen Rowe, Budget Officer

(360) 902-2204

[owen.rowe@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:owen.rowe@dfw.wa.gov)