

2024 Agency Request Legislation



Since 1947 the Washington State Legislature has obligated funding for certain elk or deer related commercial crop damage payments, which limited compensation from the General Fund-State to \$30,000 and \$120,000 from the State Wildlife Account (a total of \$150,000) to be used statewide per fiscal year. The number and cost of claims the Department receives has increased significantly over the last 30 years and single claims are limited to \$10,000 under the statute. A claimant may file an administrative appeal. From 1947 to 2009, administrative appeals were capped at the statutory amount. In 2009, the cap on appeals was removed. Because the funding is limited in statute, the Department is unable to spend additional General Fund-State funding on these damage claims within a fiscal year. Therefore, unpaid claims are carried over year-to-year until funding is again available.

This limitation prevents the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife from adequately serving communities that experience higher levels of commercial crop damage from wildlife, particularly deer and elk.

This proposal would:

- increase the limit of General Fund-State compensation for certain commercial crop damage from \$30,000 per fiscal year to \$300,000 per fiscal year to address the increase in damage claims and costs,
- increase the statutory award amount from \$10,000 to \$30,000 which would reduce process and time for both the Department and the claimant and reduce the administrative costs of unnecessary appeals,
- limit the carryover of unpaid claims to a single subsequent fiscal year,
- limit appeal awards to no greater than \$30,000 in value, and
- require the Department to submit a report to the Legislature recommending amendments to the crop damage statutes in RCW.

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