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(Gov) Agency: Tribal Gaming Revenue Allocations
Elk Reintroduction - DNR

Recommendations:

Paper No. 167: Alternative 2 (a)

Comments: This proposal is only tenuously related to the goals of the MOU between the tribes and the state, but I think it's an ok use of the money.

However, I am recommending going with Alternative 2, which is a reduced version of the gov's proposal, because that is what DNR originally requested (see paragraph 4). I don't think we should rush this elk reintroduction program too much. If we move a little more cautiously, we can work out some of the inevitable problems before larger spending magnifies them. Plus, we can then use $150,000 on something else - maybe something better suited to the MOU.

Again, though, I don't have really strong feelings about this, and would be willing to defer to the cast-and-blast crowd. Also, any other funding source is fine with me as well for the elk program (i.e. fish & wildlife account or forestry account).

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Tribal Gaming Revenue Allocations

Elk Reintroduction (DNR -- Fish and Wildlife)

[LFB 1999-01 Budget Summary: Page 420, #6]

CURRENT LAW

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point is statutorily directed to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of reintroducing elk into the northern part of the state and to formulate a management plan for the reintroduction of elk if the conclusions of the study demonstrate that the reintroduction is feasible. The University must conduct the study by monitoring the behavior of an experimental herd brought into the state and assess the herd's compatibility with other resources in the area where the study is conducted.

GOVERNOR

Provide $250,000 PR and 0.5 PR wildlife biologist position beginning in 2000-01 from tribal gaming revenue allocations to allow the Department, effective July 1, 2000, to manage the elk reintroduction program in the state.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The UW-Stevens Point study is being conducted in the Chequamegon National Forest in portions of Ashland, Bayfield, Price and Sawyer Counties by monitoring the behavior of an experimental herd that the University brought into the state from Michigan. Twenty-five elk were released near Clam Lake into a 720 square mile study area of the Forest in May, 1995. The population of the herd is now estimated at 56.

2. In 1998, meetings were held between DNR and the Wisconsin Elk Study Committee (an organization that proposed the release of the experimental herd in the Chequamegon made up of representatives from various federal, state and local government agencies, industries, sportspersons groups and citizens) to plan for the potential transfer of the elk study project to DNR. Management guidelines and data from the UW-Stevens Point study, which would be submitted to the public for review and comment in the fall of 1999, will be used by DNR to design an elk management plan. The Department also anticipates making a recommendation on the feasibility of managing the elk herd to the Natural Resources Board for action by the Board in early 2000.

3. At the current rate of growth, under optimum conditions, the elk herd could number 500 by 2010 without transporting additional elk into the state. The Department's intent is to eventually manage a population large enough to support both elk viewing and hunting.

4. The Department requested $100,000 related to elk reintroduction, which was proposed to be used for continued elk studies, elk herd monitoring and management. The Governor, however, provided $250,000 for the purposes the Department identified as well as for transporting additional elk into the state.

5. Decisions on where to expand the elk herd will likely be made after completion of the University study. Administration and Department officials have indicated that sites on forested land in the northern part of the state would seem the most appropriate. Other sites in the state, such as forest land in Jackson County, may also be considered for an expansion herd.

6. Rather than provide funding for any expansion of the elk herd at this time, the Committee could choose to fund an amount equal to the Department's original request to allow only for management of the current herd. Additional funding for expansion of the herd could be considered in the 2001-03 budget, after the results of the study are known and the Natural Resources Board has acted on the issue.

7. One consideration for the use of tribal gaming revenue is how well it fits with the memoranda of understanding (MOU) between the state and the tribes related to the use of compact revenues. Elk reintroduction does not clearly fall within the specified criteria. However, one of the purposes included in most of the MOU is the promotion of tourism in the state. To the extent that the elk reintroduction program is seen as promoting elk viewing and future hunting and related tourism, it could be argued this use of tribal gaming revenue may be consistent with the compact MOU.

8. Since one of the goals of the elk management program is to support a herd large enough for a viable hunting season, the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund may be viewed as a more appropriate funding source for these activities. Given that forest lands are currently being used as habitat for elk and will likely be used for any expansion of the herd, the forestry account of the conservation fund is another possible source of funding.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide $250,000 and 0.5 position beginning in 2000-01 from the following funding source to allow DNR, effective July 1, 2000, to manage the elk reintroduction program in the state, including the introduction of additional elk.

a. tribal gaming revenue allocations (the Governor's recommendation)

b. fish and wildlife account

Alternative 1b	PR	SEG	TOTAL
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $250,000	$250,000	$0
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 0.50	0.50	0.00

c. forestry account

Alternative 1c	PR	SEG	TOTAL
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $250,000	$250,000	$0
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 0.50	0.50	0.00

2. Provide $100,000 and 0.5 position beginning in 2000-01 from the following funding source to allow DNR, effective July 1, 2000, to manage the current elk herd in the state.

a. tribal gaming revenue allocations

Alternative 2a	PR
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $150,000

b. the fish and wildlife account

Alternative 2b	PR	SEG	TOTAL
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $250,000	$100,000	- $150,000
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 0.50	0.50	0.00

c. the forestry account

Alternative 2c	PR	SEG	TOTAL
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $250,000	$100,000	- $150,000
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 0.50	0.50	0.00

3. Maintain current law.

Alternative 3	PR
1999-01 FUNDING (Change to Bill)	- $250,000
2000-01 POSITIONS (Change to Bill)	- 0.50

Prepared by: Russ Kava