



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #566

Elk Hunting Fees (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

Bill Agency

[LFB 2007-09 Budget Summary: Page 412, #12]

CURRENT LAW

DNR is authorized to issue elk hunting licenses and to limit the number of elk hunters and elk harvested in any area of the state. However, the Department has not established an elk hunting season because the elk herd has not met the state population goal. The Department has set an overwinter goal for the Clam Lake elk herd of 1,400 animals. A hunt would be considered when the Wisconsin elk herd reaches an overwinter population of approximately 200 animals. Since 2002, the herd surviving winter has consisted of approximately 105 elk.

GOVERNOR

Increase the fee for a resident elk hunting license from \$49 to \$75 and the fee for a nonresident elk hunting license from \$251 to \$400 (including the \$2 wildlife damage surcharge and 75¢ issuing fee). Further, increase the application processing fee for both a resident and a nonresident elk hunting license from \$3 to \$10.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. DNR anticipates a limited bull-only elk season could be instituted as early as December, 2009. While very few licenses would be expected to be available, DNR estimates that more than 20,000 hunters would apply, generating over \$200,000 in annual revenue (beginning in fiscal year 2009-10 or later). It could be argued that, since the elk herd has not grown appreciably over the past several years, it is unlikely that an elk hunting season would take place before the

2009-11 biennium. Therefore, it may be unnecessary to increase the fees at this time.

2. On the other hand, if the herd were to reach targeted levels and a limited elk hunting season were to be held in 2009, it could be argued the framework for the initial season should be established.

3. As the elk herd grows, crop damage can be expected. Elk damage will be an eligible cost under the wildlife damage program once DNR promulgates a rule that establishes an elk hunting season. The wildlife damage program provides landowners in participating counties with financial assistance for abatement projects to reduce crop damage and partially reimburses losses incurred from crop damage. The \$2 surcharge on an elk license would be expected to generate only minimal revenue for some time. Therefore, an alternative would be to direct a portion of the application processing fee to fund wildlife damage claims and abatement projects. If 50% of revenues were designated for wildlife damage, over \$100,000 annually would be expected once an elk season were established. If \$2 per application were designated for the wildlife damage program, over \$20,000 annually would be expected.

ALTERNATIVES TO BILL

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to increase the fee for a resident elk hunting license from \$49 to \$75, increase the fee for a nonresident elk hunting license from \$251 to \$400), and increase the application processing fee for both a resident and a nonresident elk hunting license from \$3 to \$10.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. In addition, specify that 50% of the revenue received from elk application fees be used for the wildlife damage claims and abatement program.

3. Adopt the Governor's recommendation. In addition, specify that \$2 of the revenue received from elk application fees be used for the wildlife damage claims and abatement program.

4. Delete provision.

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