



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873
Email: fiscal.bureau@legis.wisconsin.gov • Website: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb>

April 22, 2015

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #476

Wolf Depredation Program Appropriation (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation)

CURRENT LAW

2011 Act 169 established a wolf harvest season. Revenue from the licenses (currently \$49 resident and \$251 non-resident) and application fees (\$10) are primarily used to administer a wolf depredation program. The wolf damage program provides payments to persons who apply for reimbursement for damage caused by wolves to livestock, hunting dogs (other than those used in wolf hunting) and pets, and control activities conducted by the Department aimed at reducing wolf damage. The wolf harvest season and damage payments only apply if the wolf is not listed on the U.S. list of endangered and threatened species or the state list of endangered and threatened species.

GOVERNOR

No provision.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. On December 19, 2014, in response to a lawsuit brought against the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia vacated the 2012 USFWS decision which delisted gray wolves in the western Great Lakes. (Wisconsin delisted the gray wolf in 2004, and as of January 27, 2012, the gray wolf was no longer a federally endangered species in Wisconsin and other parts of the western Great Lakes region). The ruling returned gray wolves in the western Great Lakes region, including Wisconsin, to the federal endangered species list. According to DNR, the implications of the ruling include the following: Wisconsin is not authorized to implement a wolf harvest season; permits which had allowed lethal removal of wolves issued to landowners experiencing wolf conflicts are no longer valid; DNR is

generally not authorized to use lethal control as part of its wolf management program (non-lethal tools and depredation compensation remain available); landowners may not kill wolves in the act of attacking domestic animals; and under federal law, dogs may not be trained or used to track wolves.

2. Prior to 2011 Act 169, the Department paid wolf damage claims (and claims for damage caused by other threatened or endangered species) from the endangered resources program. Under current law, if the gray wolf is on the federal endangered species list, DNR may use the segregated endangered resources account and the GPR appropriation used to match certain endangered resources voluntary contributions to pay claims for damage associated with gray wolves. The endangered resources account is primarily funded through the voluntary endangered resources corporate and individual income tax check-off and sales of the endangered resources license plate. DNR indicates they may also utilize federal grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (livestock demonstration grant) for wolf depredation payments.

3. As DNR will not be permitted to hold a wolf harvest season while the gray wolf remains on the federal endangered species list, the fish and wildlife account appropriation for the deposit of all moneys received from wolf harvest season revenues to be used for the wolf depredation program could be reestimated at zero for the 2015-17 biennium [Alternative 1]. DNR officials indicate that even if the wolf were to be delisted at the federal level, this would need to occur by early July, 2016 in order for the Department to implement a wolf harvest season in fall, 2016, and by early July, 2017 for fall, 2017. As a continuing, all moneys received appropriation, if a wolf hunt were allowed during the 2015-17 biennium, DNR could seek DOA approval to expend any revenues received for the wolf damage program.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Delete \$249,000 annually from the conservation fund appropriation for the deposit of all moneys received from wolf harvesting licenses and processing fees [20.370(5)(fv)]. (The statutory authority would remain but the appropriation would be estimated at zero in each year.)

ALT 1	Change to Bill
SEG	- \$498,000

2. Take no action. (The appropriation would remain estimated at \$249,000 in each year.)

Prepared by: Erin Probst