



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #648

Managing Wildlife Diseases (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife and Recreation)

[LFB 2001-03 Budget Summary: Page 469, #4]

CURRENT LAW

Within the DNR, the Bureau of Wildlife Management is responsible for the protection and management of wildlife populations and habitat. Wildlife biologists and technicians manage and regulate various species, including bear, deer, geese, turkey, and waterfowl. Department staff also assist in the management of wildlife on private land, and take part in related educational efforts. In conjunction with its wildlife management efforts, DNR also handles issues pertaining to urban and captive wildlife, as well as wildlife rehabilitation.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$150,000 annually from the fish and wildlife account for sampling and laboratory testing to manage emerging disease risks, including long-term disease monitoring of the deer herd for risk of chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis. Efforts would also include assessing the health of urban geese prior to relocation, and monitoring fur-bearing animals for rabies

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Management of the Wisconsin deer herd is a primary responsibility of DNR. With the exception of isolated cases of bovine Tuberculosis (TB) in several captive elk herds (which were subsequently destroyed), Wisconsin has remained free of large-scale disease problems in its deer herd. Conservation wardens provide an accessible contact for sportsmen who shoot or observe potentially infected deer, and the DNR already conducts limited testing based on reports from hunters. Staff wildlife biologists, working in conjunction with conservation wardens and wildlife education staff undertake this responsibility. From this perspective, it may seem reasonable to entrust the monitoring of wildlife for disease incidence to the DNR.

2. Michigan's highly publicized struggle with bovine TB in its deer herd has raised concern among farmers, wildlife watchers, hunters, and wildlife managers. In addition to infecting the Michigan deer herd, bovine TB has been documented in carnivores known to feed on deer populations, and several Michigan cattle herds. Should this disease proliferate in Wisconsin, the economic impact on both the dairy and tourism industries could be severe. In addition, as the most likely means of introducing bovine TB, chronic wasting disease, and some other animal diseases into Wisconsin's resident deer or cattle herds is by importing infected livestock, developing a cooperative approach to detection and management with the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection may be advisable. From this perspective, it could be argued the issue of wild and domestic animal disease management should be considered in a broader context. If the Governor's recommendation is not adopted, DNR could seek funding after a comprehensive state plan was developed. This would allow consideration of resources from other agencies in regard to management and prevention initiatives.

ALTERNATIVES TO BASE

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$150,000 annually from the fish and wildlife account for sampling and laboratory testing to manage emerging disease risks, including long-term disease monitoring of the deer herd for risk of chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis. Efforts would also include assessing the health of urban geese prior to relocation, and monitoring fur-bearing animals for rabies.

Alternative 1	SEG
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$300,000
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>\$0</i>

2. Do not adopt the Governor's recommendation. Rather, allow DNR to submit a request under s. 13.10, without the finding of emergency, for up to \$150,000 SEG annually for a comprehensive animal disease management plan in collaboration with DATCP and other affected governmental agencies. The Joint Committee on Finance could provide funding upon approval of the management plan.

Alternative 2	SEG
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$0
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>-\$300,000</i>

3. Maintain current law.

Alternative 3	SEG
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$0
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>-\$300,000</i>

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