

Wildlife and State Parks Issues

Overview. Last year, a law was passed requiring that the introduction or reintroduction of a threatened or endangered species in Colorado must first be approved by the General Assembly. This year, a bill authorized the reintroduction of two endangered species. Another bill requires that a report, which includes the ecological and economic impact of a species introduction, be submitted to the General Assembly to assist them in approving or not approving the introduction. A bill allows the Colorado Division of Wildlife to purchase property that is endangered species habitat in order to manage the land.

Several bills address the state's management of wildlife populations and preservation of wildlife habitat. Wildlife populations, such as deer and elk, are declining in Colorado. One bill requires the Division of Wildlife to develop a predator management plan that will benefit deer and other wildlife populations. Another bill will improve wildlife habitat on private property through a hunting license program for some landowners. The Division of Wildlife, through a bill, will allow nonprofit organizations to auction certain hunting licenses. Moneys will be used for big game habitat development and research.

The Division of Wildlife was the subject of several bills. Two bills attempted to designate the Division as an enterprise, and three bills increase license fees for hunting and fishing. A resolution creates an interim committee to study the Division.

Endangered species. House Bill 00-1314 authorizes the reintroduction of the endangered bony tail chub and the black-footed ferret by the Division of Wildlife. House Bill 00-1322 states that the introduction (or reintroduction) of a non-aquatic species will be conducted through legislation. Before a species may be introduced, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources must submit to the General Assembly a report that includes the ecological and economic impact of the introduction and the species' probable survival rates. House Bill 00-1071 authorizes the Colorado Division of Wildlife to purchase two parcels of land in Larimer County. One parcel, known as Circle Ranch, has deer, elk, and bighorn sheep winter range, as well as approximately two-thirds of the endangered preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat in Larimer County.

Management of wildlife and wildlife habitat. Through House Bill 00-1483, the General Assembly directed the Division of Wildlife to develop and implement a predator management plan by March 1, 2001. The bill creates a five member Predator Management Advisory Committee to assist the Division

with plan development. The committee will be co-chaired by the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Natural Resources and the College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University to serve as resources to the committee. The bill also appropriates \$150,000 from Wildlife Cash Fund for committee and management plan expenses for FY 2000-01.

House Bill 00-1098 helps create a hunting license program as an incentive to landowners to provide improved habitat for wildlife. Through the program, participating landowners allow hunters to access wildlife on their property. Landowners receive fifteen percent of the licenses established for each big game species in each game management area. The bill specifies certain program conditions, including a requirement that participating landowners enter into a management plan agreement with the Division of Wildlife. House Bill 00-1255 authorizes the Division of Wildlife to issue a number of deer, elk and antelope hunting licenses to certain nonprofit organizations to auction or raffle. The organization will retain up to eighty percent of the proceeds. The remaining proceeds may only be used for the benefit of deer, elk or antelope research, habitat development, or educational projects.

Revenue for the Division of Wildlife. Two bills attempted to designate the Division and Wildlife Commission as an enterprise, which would exempt Division revenues from being considered for state spending under the provisions in the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR).

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