



Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, First District
Peter Browning, Second District
Lisa Janicki, Third District

March 1, 2024

Representative Timm Ormsby
JLOB 315
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Representative Shaver General Fund Appropriation Request for Bear Hazard Assessments

Representative Ormsby,

We write to encourage you to include Rep. Clyde Shaver's \$224,000 of the general fund state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to conduct up to four community bear hazard assessments in communities with historical high levels of human-bear conflict. WDFW would also be required to submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with initial funding recommendations to prioritize and implement the bear hazard assessments by December 31, 2024.

This year many stakeholders have been advocating in Olympia for funding that would help reduce human-bear conflict in rural communities. In 2022, one female and three cubs were lethally removed in North Bend. In Chelan, a homeowner killed a mother bear, and orphaned two cubs, only one was rescued. In Leavenworth, a mother bear attacked a woman and was lethally removed, both of her cubs were rescued. In Whatcom County a mother bear attacked a man, and both of her cubs were never found. In Spokane, one female was lethally removed. In all instances, habituation to human food and garbage were the problem. Thankfully, there are proven methods to reduce human-bear conflict and promote safety in our communities.

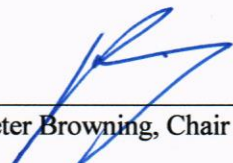
Rep. Shavers' budget request would empower the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to expand its Bear Wise outreach to provide additional support for communities seeking to develop Bear Wise programs that reduce human-bear conflict. Bear Wise programs begin with hazard assessments that pinpoint conflict locations and offer solutions that address known hazard areas and driving factors that result in human-bear conflict.

Many communities across the country confront human-bear conflict. Those communities have developed a number of best practices designed to reduce conflict. Conducting a bear hazard assessment is often the first step to creating a bear smart community. Unfortunately, many communities do not have the funds to conduct assessments that can cost up to \$35,000. These bear hazard assessments will give resources to front line communities that regularly encounter wildlife.

Thank you for considering this worthy effort.

Sincerely,

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**


Peter Browning, Chair


Lisa Janicki, Commissioner


Ron Wesen, Commissioner