



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

WILDLIFE • HABITAT • HUNTERS' RIGHTS

P.O. Box 1706, Medford, OR 97501 • (541) 772-7313 • Fax (541) 772-0964
oregonhunters.org • oha@ccountry.net

Testimony on SB-303
Paul Donheffner, OHA Legislative Chairman

OHA, with 10,000 members statewide, appreciates the fact that elk damage to farmers and ranchers is a very real issue across many parts of our state. Elk are also very near and dear to Oregon's 264,000 hunters, who pay over \$26 million in license fees, and \$17 million in PR funds to support hunting and wildlife conservation. Simply put, elk are a very big deal for us.

There is currently a damage tag program, which will sunset in January 2020 unless action is taken by this Legislature. 2019 is the programs last year. So clearly something needs to happen now. As we've testified on SB-301, we support removing the sunset, which HB2067 does.

SB-303 addresses the mobile nature of elk and the fact they don't distinguish between property lines. We have heard this issue before. We've also personally experienced the frustration of watching elk wander off public land and onto private land where they can't be pursued by hunters without permission. Or the frustration of hunting them on private land, with permission, only to watch them disappear onto adjacent property where there is no permission granted.

That's hunting. The elk get to live another day.

We don't support expanding the use of damage tags on property that a landowner doesn't own. As I testified on SB-301, we are also very concerned about the language changes in Section 1 changing the use of the term "person" and "landowner". Again, we don't know if this is intentional, or simply LC making stylist changes, but we are concerned that it opens the door to abuse and unintended consequences. The current language is ok, the new language is not.

With 4 elk damage bills currently being considered by this Legislature, it is clear that the current program needs a closer in depth review. We participated in many meetings held by ODFW over the past few years and share in the frustration over lack of meaningful results.

Once again, we would like to recommend that an interim Legislative Task Force or work group be established to come up with better solutions and get buy in from all the stakeholders prior to 2021.

In the meantime, we support removing the sunset. We want to make a good faith effort at finding a solution that works for landowners, hunters, and elk.

This is a very important issue for all of the stakeholders. Let's take the time to get it right.