

SB 398 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

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Meeting Dates: 3/28

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Defines "elk depredation hunting tag" (tag) as a tag authorizing a person to take an elk of any sex or age during elk hunting season in the two years following issuance of a tag. Directs State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) to issue tag to person who demonstrates that, on each of 30 or more days in one calendar year, 50 or more elk were on the person's property. Requires Commission issue one tag for every 50 elk demonstrated to be on a person's property. Authorizes person to sell or transfer tag. Directs Commission to adopt rules establishing how a person may demonstrate presence of elk. Specifies that person receiving tag is eligible for other hunting tags and permits, consistent with wildlife laws.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Property damage commonly attributed to elk includes agricultural crop and pasture reduction due to grazing; tree damage due to bark gnawing or seedling pulling; and destruction of fences, gardens, and yards.

The Southwest Oregon Landowner Preference Pilot Program was created by the legislature in 2003 to address damage caused by elk on private lands in Jackson, Josephine, Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties by implementing less restrictive landowner preference rules for qualifying landowners in the pilot study area. The program was set to sunset in 2014. In 2013, the legislature expanded the program statewide by creating the Oregon Landowner Damage Program. Currently, the program is required to limit the use of damage tags to taking antlerless elk and can only be used on property owned, leased, or rented by the landowner or by a business entity that includes the landowner as a principal partner or shareholder. The program is scheduled to sunset on January 2, 2020.

Senate Bill 398 would authorize the State Fish and Wildlife Commission to issue elk depredation hunting tags.