



Oregon

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To: The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources



House Bill 3227

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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss House Bill 3227 with you today. The Department appreciates the opportunity to work on issues involving elk damage with Representative Barreto, Senator Hansell, landowners, Oregon Hunters Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and other stakeholder groups. The Department believes there are still some issues with the bill as drafted by legislative counsel, we would appreciate any opportunity to continue work collaboratively on this bill.

The Department believes the tools needed to address excessive numbers of elk on private property exist and can resolve many of the problems landowners' experience. The difficulty in addressing elk damage has to do with the mosaic of ownerships and tolerance of landowners on the landscape. Some landowners are more tolerant of elk than others, some landowners do not allow hunting on their property, and some charge access fees which reduce the number of tag holders to harvest elk. Additionally there are some landowners that are simply not willing to use the tools the Department has to offer. In the end, some landowners with damage struggle to find a solution. The Department believes the best way to resolve these multiple landownership problems is through collaboration among the affected landowners, the public and the Department.

Currently, the Department does not issue tags to address damage on private property unless the landowner or corporation managing the land authorizes it. The use of the word person in House Bill 3227 instead of landowner or landowner's agent presents the opportunity for a person to obtain tags to take elk causing damage without the actual landowner's permission.

Again by referencing person over landowner, the bill may not limit the number of persons eligible to register for a property or business, and develops the scenario where there is no limit to the number of tags that are issued to an individual person.

House Bill 3227 as originally introduced outlines a method for hunters to take elk at night with the aid of a light. The -1 amendment removes the language that would allow for this practice. Currently, the Department does not authorize hunting at night for any big game. Kill permits are issued to landowners to authorize taking an animal causing damage and those permits allow removal at night. Animals taken under a kill permit are donated to charity and are not for personal use by the permittee. Any hunting at night on public property would require each person to have an agreement with the public land management agency (ORS 166.663).

The Department appreciates this is a pilot program, we will continue to work with sponsors and proponents of the bill to develop a program that would work across Oregon, involving thousands of acres of private land and adjacent or intermixed public lands.

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