



**OREGON CHAPTER
OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**
PO Box 2378
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March 28, 2019

FROM: The Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society

TO: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Opposition to SB 301, SB 398, and SB 303

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Olsen and members of the committee,

The Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society is writing to express our opposition to SB 301, SB 398, and SB 303. Wildlife populations, including elk, are managed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in trust for the public of Oregon in accordance with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. The proposals put forward in this bill violate the principles established within the successful North American Model.

The Wildlife Society is an international organization founded in 1937, representing nearly 10,000 professionals, including scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, consultants, conservation officers, students and others who manage, conserve, and study wildlife populations and habitat. In Oregon, the Oregon Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ORTWS) represents nearly 500 such professionals from many areas of public and private enterprise.

Our mission is to promote wise conservation and management of wildlife resources in Oregon by serving and representing natural resource professionals. A central purpose of ORTWS is to support scientifically sound management policies.

ODFW is tasked with managing wildlife populations such as elk in trust as a public resource. Wildlife managers must balance managing populations sustainably for the interests of all users while reducing wildlife human conflicts. Fortunately, ODFW already has a wide variety of tools available to work with private landowners when addressing conflict with wildlife. These include lethal and non-lethal techniques to reduce impacts of elk herds on private lands. For removing elk the options include:

- Controlled hunts utilizing licensed hunters
- Landowner preference tags
- Damage control tags
- Emergency hunts
- Kill permits

Non-lethal methods to address impacts include:

- Habitat improvement projects to redistribute herds
- Fertilizer projects to improve crop yields reducing foraging impacts
- Fencing projects to prevent forage consumption

The broad range of options available to the professionals at ODFW already provide opportunities for landowners to find creative and collaborative solutions that will be effective in their specific circumstances. However, all options require landowners to engage with ODFW wildlife managers to develop plans that will work. Engagement by landowners has proven effective in a number of locations across Oregon, including controlled elk hunting in the Zumwalt Prairie region of Northeast Oregon.

There are changes in the definitions used in this bill that present problems for management. Specifically, the change in terminology from “landowner” to “person” changes the intent of the damage management and increases the risk of unintended impacts to elk populations. It also creates a situation in which elk are essentially privatized for use by damage tags, and will in effect reduce opportunities for the public hunting.

Development of strategies to manage damage caused by elk is and should be undertaken collaboratively by ODFW’s wildlife professionals and those experiencing the damage with a full understanding of appropriate management tools and potential for successful implementation. Because wildlife is and should remain a public resource, resulting management strategies must incorporate the interests of Oregon’s broad variety of stakeholders. Further, implementation must consider multiple variables, and be flexible across different areas and in different environments. We believe the current list of options available in ODFW’s current damage management policy are more than adequate to address the issue.

On behalf of ORTWS Members and Board, thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or to engage further discussion.

Respectfully,

ORTWS Board of Directors

ORTWS Contacts for SB 301, SB 398, and SB 303:

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