

Watts Remy

From: John Vardanega <j4vardanega@q.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 5:30 PM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: RE: Elk damage testimony

Comments apply to SB301 and SB398.

I would also note that the "50+ elk for 30+ days" criteria in SB398 does not account for excessive elk damage caused by a smaller herd that is concentrated on a smaller acreage, such as what I am experiencing. A more realistic method would be based on concentration, such as "elk per crop acre" or similar ratio, and not strictly on overall herd size. 50 elk on 40 acres would devastate, while 50 elk on 400 acres might be tolerable.

Thanks,
John P Vardanega
J4 Farms
Columbia County, OR

From: SENR Exhibits [mailto:SENR.Exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 4:58 PM
To: John Vardanega
Subject: RE: Elk damage testimony

Hi John,

Good afternoon, I received your email, but I can't properly insert your comments to the record without a bill number to attach your testimony to. Which bill(s) did you want to comment on?

Best,
Remy Watts

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From: John Vardanega <j4vardanega@q.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 4:57 PM
To: SENR Exhibits <SENR.Exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov>
Subject: Elk damage testimony

I have experienced elk damage over the past several years from an elk herd that has moved into the area, and is now permanently encamped on acreage I lease. There have never been elk in these fields before this – in fact, I have never seen an elk in this part of the county in my lifetime before this. Either their numbers are expanding, their territory is expanding, their old territory is disappearing, their old territory is overrun with predators, or their old territory is not being managed to meet the feed needs of a growing population.

The total tillable acreage in the area is about 70 acres, with the acreage most impacted by the herd being about 30 of those. This acreage is surrounded by residential development, and the herd frequently causes traffic problems on the adjacent road and state highway from sightseers stopping to look and take photos. The elk herd exceeds 35 head, with about two-thirds of those being breeding-age cows. Calving this year will expand this herd dramatically.

This concentration of elk is insupportable on this small acreage. It is impossible to harvest a profitable crop off these acres; the elk damage reduces yields to the point where certain crops cost more to grow than they will return. One farmer recently stopped farming some nearby acreage because of elk damage. Another farmer will stop farming his leased acreage this fall because it is unprofitable to the point that he will not even break even this year. I am not far from doing the same. These elk will put us out of business. Our landowners will lose their rental income, we will lose our farm income, and the state will lose our tax revenue.

The ODFW turns a deaf ear to complaints of damage. They will not issue damage tags. They will not compensate for damage. They will not help move these herds away. They will not manage their numbers. They will do nothing while farmers are driven out of business.

Farmers must make a decent profit to survive, and profit margins are slim enough without having to feed wildlife for free. Elk (and Canada geese and deer) are eating and trampling all profits from our farmed crops, and we cannot feed our own families on what is left.

At least give us some management tools, such as damage tags or relaxed regulations, to shift these herds and reduce crop losses, or a way to harvest a few of these elk to partially compensate for crop loss and help feed our families.

John P Vardanega
J4 Farms
Columbia County, OR