

March 28, 2019

Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

My name is Bill Tsiatsos and I own a 2,100 acre ranch in the Starkey, Oregon area, which is SW of La Grande, in Eastern Oregon.

For fifty years, I have owned and managed a cattle business on this piece of ground.

When I was 23 years old, I established this cow/calf ranching operation. At that time, the land was capable of sustaining 165-180 pair of animals. Currently, it can sustain about 125 pair.

Over the last fifty years, the number of invasive Elk has grown from a few head to as many as 1,000 head. For the past 20 years or more, a herd of 200 to 300 head has been a common view on my property.

My plan of operation has always included a season of "Rest and Rotation" for each pasture. Due to the influx of Elk numbers, this process has been almost impossible.

I've heard Elk referred to as "Wildlife Species Indicators," which means they recognize where the good feed is and that's the migration pattern they establish, from one freshly growing pasture to the next. In this process, the animals destroy grazing land and do a lot of fence damage.

The Elk move onto my pastures at "undesirable use periods," which is when the ground is wet and soft, the young tender grass is surfacing and the root structures are forming. These large herds uproot, and compact the ground causing a huge loss in grass production.

These Elk are dictating how I manage my operation. Year after year, they are causing extensive damage to my grass production, therefore, creating a huge financial burden to my business and livelihood.

Think about this hypothetical situation:

I should be able to sell a 100 ton of hay from this years crop, however, due to the Elk ("midnight marauders,") I only have 60 ton? All I have to sell is hay. These animals are reducing my income significantly.

How would you respond to losing or forfeiting a percentage of your income?

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

William (Bill) Tsiatsos