

Shaun W Robertson

PO Box 242
John Day, OR 97845
(541) 620-0211

RobFam10@ORTELCO.net



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Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery

RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 637

Dear Senator Golden:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB637, a bill to allow holders of certain take or kill permits for damage causing or nuisance animals to retain carcasses for consumption. I urge you to pass SB637 with modifications.

The right of a landowner to use lethal force to prevent damage to private property caused by State-owned wildlife existed prior to the creation of the State and has been formally recognized in Oregon law since at least 1872. The requirement of a landowner to obtain a permit to kill most offending wildlife, as well as the State's inability to deny those permits, has a lengthy history in Oregon's wildlife laws. The right of a landowner to retain the carcass of wildlife killed under permit, however, has varied considerably throughout history for multiple reasons.

Regardless, by the 1950's, the Oregon State Game Commission was reporting to the Legislature that the restrictions and conditions—predominantly related to carcass retention—placed on the landowner's use of kill permits was a direct impediment to the use of the permits. Nothing much has changed today, even though ODFW has made some incremental improvements in how they administer of kill permits. The same issues that have always prevented their use remain, and the number of kill permits issued on an annual basis hasn't varied significantly in over 70 years.

Additionally, my professional experience in Grant County working with the County Wildlife Committee and others to establish a "Rancher Food Bank" to supply charitable organizations with both domestic and wild game is considerably different from what ODFW reports in their testimony to this Senate Committee. Furthermore, my direct personal experience with wild game donations to charitable organizations suggests that foodstuffs—like raw wild game—requiring preparation frequently do not make it to the intended consumer (often, not even the intended species).

Although SB637 could benefit from a couple minor but important revisions, it does at least begin to move us towards addressing the core obstacles to the use of kill permits for big game damage prevention and management. Again, I urge its passage with modification.

Sincerely,

/s/ Shaun W Robertson
Shaun W Robertson
John Day