



# Oregon

Tina Kotek., Governor

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Office of the Director

4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE

Salem, OR 97302

(503) 947-6044

FAX (503) 947-6042

[odfw.com](http://odfw.com)

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**To: The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair  
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water**

### **House Bill 4061**

Brian Wolfer, Wildlife Division Deputy Administrator  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) appreciates the opportunity to provide information relevant to House Bill 4061 and has no position on the bill.

ODFW thanks the co-chairs of the Elk and Deer Damage Compensation Workgroup for including ODFW in the workgroup that helped to develop this bill concept. The workgroup provided a forum for ODFW to engage with various stakeholders seeking solutions to deer and elk damage impacts to private landowners and to share data and information the department has on the subject.

By statute, ODFW must manage native wildlife species, including elk, to prevent serious depletion of any species and to provide optimum recreational and aesthetic benefit (ORS 496.012). Additionally, by statute, it is the policy of the state that appropriate measures be taken to assist farmers, ranchers, and others in solving wildlife damage problems and that the various levels of government involved in wildlife damage should mutually cooperate in these efforts (ORS 610.005).

HB 4061 addresses elk damage to private agricultural crops and infrastructure through the creation of an elk damage prevention and compensation pilot program. The bill directs ODFW to consult with the Oregon Department of Agriculture regarding the selection of two pilot program areas. Before September 25, 2028, ODFW must submit a report summarizing the occurrence of elk damage inside and outside the pilot areas, describing any changes to elk hunting opportunities, and summarizing information on elk population sizes and distributions throughout the state. ODFW maintains a record of elk damage complaints received by local department biologists. These records would inform the selection of the pilot program areas, if adopted.

ODFW is committed to working cooperatively with landowners to resolve wildlife conflict. ODFW staff actively engage with landowners and agricultural producers to provide advice on techniques that can be employed as deterrents to elk damage and issue harassment and kill permits as

appropriate. When funding is available, ODFW provides assistance to landowners experiencing damage, but this assistance is usually limited to supplying fencing design standards and materials to protect haystacks and fertilizer for pastures.

ODFW also develops hunting seasons as a long-term tool by which landowner can utilize licensed hunters to address conflicts with elk. The full array of options to utilize licensed hunters include:

- General and controlled seasons designed to address localized populations and anticipated agricultural conflicts, including expanded opportunities created in 2020 for extended time frame for landowners to utilize hunters in select areas with chronic damage from resident elk herds,
- Emergency hunts to address unanticipated damage,
- The Landowner Preference (LOP) program to give preference to landowners when tag availability is limited, and
- The Oregon Landowner Damage Program which allows local ODFW staff to issue elk tags with an antlerless bag limit to hunters of the landowner's choosing to alleviate damage.

Currently, there are no programs that provide direct payment to landowners as compensation for damage from elk or to fund preventative measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide background information related to HB 4061.

**CONTACT:**

**Debbie Colbert, Deputy Director for Fish and Wildlife Programs, (503) 947-6072**