

February 8, 2024

RE: HB 4061

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) participated in the initial conversations and workgroup process to develop the concepts outlined in HB 4061. We appreciated the opportunity to provide our perspectives on the complicated issue of elk damage and landowner compensation.

From our perspective, the bill establishes a pilot program that requires thoughtful eligibility parameters.

- The \$10,000 income threshold legitimizes the eligible landowner as an agricultural producer. While this number will mean that smaller landowners may not qualify for the program, this is a pilot program with a finite amount of funding, and we agree that these limited funds should be prioritized for farms and producers whose income relies on agricultural production. Similarly, the requirement of living on or leasing eligible land for at least six consecutive months prior to enrolling in the pilot program also provides a necessary threshold for potential compensation.
- Landowners are not eligible for compensation from this fund if they already receive compensation for providing hunting opportunities.
- Landowners must show a history of repeated use of the suite of deterrence and preventative measures to be eligible for compensation from the fund.
- Public hunting is included in the suite of deterrence measures. We understand that it may not be appropriate in every instance, the use of public hunters is an important option for landowners to utilize when working to move elk off the property.
- The program and fund are rightly administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) will work in conjunction with ODA related to the establishment of the pilot areas, reporting, and assisting landowners with preventative measures.
- Funding for the program would come from General Fund dollars. This funding source is appropriate since Oregon's wildlife is held in public trust and owned by all. Landowners incur an inherent responsibility for wildlife and Oregonians must also incur the cost of assisting landowners disproportionately effected by the damage elk herds can cause to private land.

As highlighted above, we are supportive of HB 4061. However, it is imperative that ongoing conversations related to elk damage issues and potential solutions are prioritized. Landowner compensation is a key part of the puzzle to solve elk damage on private lands, however it cannot be the only component identified and instituted. To fully address the problem of elk damage, a more robust, facilitated process that includes stakeholders, state agencies, and federal land management agencies will be needed.

Thank you for your time,

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