



Oregon

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**To: The Honorable Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire**

Senate Bill 812

Brian Wolfer, Wildlife Division Deputy Administrator

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Department appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 812, which repeals a sunset, making the Landowner Preference (LOP) Program permanent.

The LOP Program was first adopted in 1981, implemented in 1982 and provided a means for landowners with a qualifying amount of property to be able to acquire controlled hunt tags for buck deer and bull elk. Controlled hunts limit the number of hunting tags available for the public, with tags awarded through a draw, thus creating the possibility that landowners, who are providing important habitat for these animals, may not have an opportunity to hunt on their own property. The LOP program was developed to address that problem. In addition, the Department feels the LOP program provides an important incentive for landowners that are providing habitat for these species.

Over the years, the statutes and administrative rules guiding the LOP program have undergone numerous revisions, and the Department has convened several working groups to discuss the program and hunting access on private lands. The current program is the result of the negotiations between hunters and landowners that occurred over decades, and the structure of the program has remained largely unchanged since statute modifications passed by the 2013 Legislative Assembly. Those modifications, allowing the Department to limit LOP tags for mule deer when mule deer populations are below management objectives, were fully implemented for the 2015 hunting seasons.

Landowner preference tags may only be used to hunt on property owned by the registered landowner. The number of LOP tags available for each registered landowners is determined by the amount of acreage they own, ranging from two tags for landowners with 40 to 160 acres, to a maximum of 14 tags for those landowners that own more than 160,000 acres. LOP tags are available for controlled deer and elk hunts including hunts with a bag limit of buck deer or bull elk, either sex, or antlerless deer or antlerless elk. A landowner can transfer LOP tags for hunts with a bag limit of antlerless deer or elk to anyone of his/her choosing but transfer of tags to non-family members for hunts with a bag limit that includes antlered deer and elk is limited to 50% of tags available to each landowner. Landowner preference tags for the hunting of pronghorn antelope may not be used for taking bucks and are only available for controlled hunts with a bag limit of either sex or doe

pronghorn. Landowners may not transfer LOP tags for hunting pronghorn antelope to non-family members.

The current LOP program also provides a means for landowners experiencing damage from deer to use their LOP tags to address that damage. With approval from the Department, each LOP deer tag may be used to take two antlerless deer prior to, during or after the hunting season dates of that tag. The Oregon Landowner Damage Program (ORS 496.158) is a separate program for landowners to address damage that is “presently occurring” from elk.

Over the last 40+ years, the LOP program has been crafted to successfully implement a fair means of providing landowners an opportunity to hunt deer, elk or pronghorn antelope residing on their property in areas where the hunting opportunity for these public resources are limited in nature, while also ensuring the department has the tools necessary to manage harvest as necessary to conserve these species. The department is requesting this program be made permanent. With the sunset date for this well-established program removed, the LOP Program would be reviewed by the Legislative Assembly in the future on an as needed basis.

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