



Oregon

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Department of Fish and Wildlife

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To: The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee



Testimony by
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Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Testimony on House Bill 2250
Testimony on House Bill 2251

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offers the following comments on House Bills 2250 and 2251.

The Landowner Preference Program was first authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 1981. The original intent of the program was to allow landowners who were unsuccessful in the controlled drawing for deer and elk tags to obtain tags to hunt their own property, and to offer a means of non-monetary compensation to landowners experiencing agricultural damage by big game. The Oregon Legislature has adopted changes to the Landowner Preference Program six times since the initial adoption. One of the most significant changes was in 1993 when the Oregon Legislature expanded the purpose of the Landowner Preference Program to include assisting landowners with addressing wildlife damage on their properties. Although location may change from year to year, addressing property damage caused by wildlife continues to be a priority of the department. The last significant changes to the main Landowner Preference Program were completed in 2009 when the Oregon Legislature placed a sunset date of January 2, 2014 on the revised statute. Currently there are over 6,200 landowners registered in the program.

The SW Pilot (HB 2251) was initiated in southern Oregon as an alternative to dealing with elk damage on private lands. This Pilot Program was designed to provide more flexibility by providing tags over a broad period of time with no minimum acreage requirement. The Pilot was used in place of the 2:1 tag exchange found in the main Landowner Preference Program. This Pilot is set to sunset in July 2014.

For the last two months the department has been meeting with a group of stakeholders representing the landowner and hunting communities to review and potentially make recommendations for changes to both the main Landowner Preference Program and the SW Pilot Program. These groups have come up with the following recommendations which the department intends to incorporate into amendments for both HB 2250 and HB 2251.

1. Change definition of immediate family
2. Create a common Sunset date of 2020 for both HB 2250 and 2251



3. Expand the SW Elk Pilot to all of Oregon
4. Remove the 2:1 elk tag split/exchange from the base LOP program as it will be replaced by the Statewide Pilot
5. Tie Landowner Preference tags to Population Management Objectives for Mule Deer only
6. Change the tag distribution formula – currently 33% can go to non-family members – so that 50% can go to non-family members

These amendments were the result of several negotiations and compromises amongst the group. Stakeholder agreement on the changes was conditional to HB's 2250 and 2251 being amended and moving forward at the same time.

The department appreciates the opportunity to provide the Committee with these comments.

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