

Oregon Hunters Association

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Honorable Senator Devlin
Honorable Representative Rayfield
Sub-Committee on Natural Resources

Testimony Against SB 247 ODFW Fee Increases

Co- Chairs Devlin and Rayfield and Members of the Sub-Committee on Natural Resources:

For the record I am Al Elkins representing the Oregon Hunters Association (OHA). I am here today to testify against SB 247 the bill that gives the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) the authority to increase hunting license and tag fees.

The OHA position against the fee increase is driven by our 10,000 members who are discouraged with the lack of deer, and elk populations. It is our opinion and shared by others as well that the ODFW budget short fall is due to the decline in sales of hunting and fishing licenses and tags, and that the fee increase is a band aid solution that does not address the real problem. Hunters tell us they are tired of paying more for less and less. One member said it best: "We don't want more hunting opportunities, we want more opportunities to see wildlife." In other words, build better hunting and fishing, and the customers will beat a path to the point of sale machines.

In addition to our concern about wildlife populations is an issue that was presented to OHA in the ODFW External Budget Advisory Committee (EBAC). It was during one of our budget sessions that we learned ODFW biologists are spending a large percentage of their time (up to 60%) providing support services to other agencies on the city, county and state levels. This means that hunter dollars are being used outside of the direct line of providing services to wildlife, habitat and conservation projects. It seems to us that the time ODFW must spend on proposals for windfarms, power lines and destination resorts must be compensated by those proposing the projects, not hunter and angler dollars. So how can we support a fee increase that will generate dollars that will not go to the services that are provided by the Wildlife and Fish Divisions of ODFW?

In conclusion, our members are asking this question in relation to a fee increase: what is the long-term plan for addressing the state audit that determined what we all know—that ODFW can't continue to support the operation they're running on the backs of a declining customer base? How can our members support an increase if they see no end to this on-going vicious spiral?

It is for these reasons and many more that OHA cannot support SB 247 that authorizes a fee increase for hunters. That concludes my testimony, I would be glad to answer any questions.