

Watts Remy

From: mariegadotti <mariegadotti@centurytel.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 9:13 PM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: Support SB 301, SB303, SB 398

Dear Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resource Members:

My name is Marie Gadotti, my husband and I farm in Columbia County and have for over 45 years. Over that time we have had elk herds move into different fields that we farm. We gave up farming a field approx 10 years ago because the elk had started staying year round. We used everything at our disposal including damage tags, hazing techniques different crops to no avail. When the elk herd surrounded our combine (the field was planted into fall wheat) the day we were to begin harvest it was the last straw. We didn't harvest enough wheat to pay for the soil preparation, seed, fertilizer, or pesticides to grow the crop. The landowner also lost money since they weren't able to rent the land for farming. No other farmer wanted to deal with the elk either.

This year we have had a different herd move into a different area and have eaten our hay fields down to nothing but weeds. We should be getting ready to fertilize but now we don't think we can save the grass. At the same time they moved into our crimson clover field (which we had already put precious dollars into planting and growing the clover) just down the road. They not only started grazing the crop but they also left deep ruts from their hoof prints throughout the field which will impair the ability to harvest whatever crop may be left once they leave. We did call ODF&W and in that conversation it became clear that was there was nothing they would do. We had asked if they would come look at the damage which they did not. We never heard anything from them after that call. This was just a month ago and in this case our hazing would have just caused more damage to the crop and which could have resulted in our moving the elk onto an adjacent 5 lane highway with the potential of injury to oncoming motorists.

We may very well be facing the same dilemma as we did 10 years ago losing more land to farm. At some point our farming operation won't be able to survive.

We ask that you support SB 301 which would allow landowners to access damage tags in overpopulated areas to prevent damage.

We ask that you support SB 303 which would allow damage tags to be used to adjacent land with landowner consent which would be beneficial to neighbors that can't hunt and allow for landowners to continue to pursue and push the herd further into public lands and will give landowners a collaborative tool to manage elk herds,

We ask that you support SB 398 which creates an "elk depredation hunting tag". This would allow the take of an elk of any sex or age during an elk hunting season and would be issued to any landowner who can demonstrate 50+ elk on a property for 30+ days in a calendar year. This would give one tag for every 50 elk and would be transferable.

While this will not help in all cases, especially when fields are inter spaced with residences and are smaller than 40 acres it **is a start**. Farmers need all the tools in their tools boxes to be able to control depredation of elk herds. No matter what crop is grown by a producer it should be treated as important as any other because it is to that farm. This issue is and continues to be an economic burden and impacting Oregon's natural resource industry.

We ask that ODF&W look into existing authorities, reach out to landowners, respond to landowners request for help, and develop deliverables to encourage elk herds to stay on public lands or forested lands instead of coming down into the farming areas. We also ask that ODF&W help landowners mitigate impact from winter elk, and reexamine their management numbers to ensure both the health of the elk herds and protection of working lands.

Sincerely,

Marie and Joe Gadotti