

Watts Remy

From: mbrady.glide@gmail.com
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2019 6:53 AM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: SB301, SB303, SB398 written testimony

Environment and Natural Resources Committee members,

My name is Matthew Brady, my wife and I raise sheep, hay, pumpkins and timber on a farm in southern Douglas County that my family has been stewarding since 1892, when my great-great-grandfather originally purchased it. I write you to encourage your support of Senate Bills 301, 303, & 398.

Our farm is located in a valley that has a robust elk population that merge and disperse into various sized herds throughout the year. When the elk herd was last on our property two weeks ago, it contained well over 50 head of animals. The elk are drawn to our farm because it, and neighboring farms and ranches, provide forage that is far more desirable to elk than the public and private timberlands that surround us. The forage that we grow for our own livestock that is our livelihood too often gets grazed indeterminately by these game animals.

This past summer I tilled up an irrigated pasture to reseed to more desirable grasses and clovers. The outlay of time to till, fertilize, reseed and irrigate this pasture was no small undertaking. As soon as the new seeding sprouted the herd of local elk began to camp out in the field on a daily and nightly basis. The elk pulled up and killed some of the fragile new plants because their roots weren't yet well established; they trampled the soil, soft from tillage, burying other new plants; and what was left they grazed to the height of a putting green.

It had been my plan to reserve the grass and clover in this field for late winter forage for our sheep. But because of the grazing of the elk, the field is only now, seven months later, beginning to approach a height at which it can be grazed in a sustainable fashion. Instead of the 8-10 inches of grass that I had planned on, the tallest grass in the field is a mere 2 inches tall, which represents several tons of forage per acre loss. This loss of forage in the pasture meant it had to be replaced with hay purchased off the farm. If I had the ability to obtain a hazing permit prior to the damage received in this particular pasture, as proposed by SB301, it is possible that the degree of damage could have been reduced.

Throughout this time we had received hazing permits from the Roseburg ODFW office, as well as damage tags once we reported the loss to ODFW staff. Often the herd of 50-60 elk would be hazed after dark, only to have them return later in the night to continue grazing our pastures. Elk were taken with damage tags one day, and the day after the herd would return to our property. During one damage tag hunt, myself and another tag holder pursued the elk to my property boundary and had a clear shot only once the herd passed onto my neighbors property. This neighbor is an absentee landowner from whom I have no doubt I would be able to obtain permission to pursue the animals onto. SB303 would allow us to have pursued these elk and potentially decreased the elk population.

The presence of the game animals on private land poses an undue burden on landowners, which only appears to be growing. Animals managed for the benefit of the public should be spending the majority of their time on publicly owned land. Five years ago we would see herd sizes on our property from 20-30 elk, half of what we currently have to endure. This kind of continued population growth will make it uneconomical to continue in the livestock business. Receiving an "elk depredation tag" as proposed in SB398 would allow for additional control of the rapidly growing elk population in our area.

The changes to the current elk damage program proposed is SB301, SB303, and SB398 are a step in the right direction of bringing elk populations in line with what can be supported by public lands in the State. I encourage you to pass these bills onto the Senate floor, and vote them into statute.

Matthew Brady