



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony on HB-3035
Paul Donheffner, Legislative Comm. Chair

OHA, with over 10,000 members statewide, is in strong support of HB-3035. We appreciate the support of Committee Chairman Witt and others in sponsoring this important bill to crack down on illegal poaching.

This bill addresses a problem that really gets legitimate hunters fired up. We're talking about cases of egregious, large scale poaching - sometimes called "spree killing", in which multiple animals are killed and often left to waste. Under current law, each count is treated as a misdemeanor in Oregon. Across the river in Washington, they're treated as felonies, and rightly so.

Some brief examples: In 2018, 11 persons were charged with 120 misdemeanors in Wasco County for unlawful take of multiple deer, bear, bobcat, squirrel and cougar, waste of wildlife and a host of other serious violations. Some of the same persons were charged in Washington for similar offenses, but as felonies. This was an organized killing ring. They weren't hunting, they were out to destroy our wildlife. It's much more than a simple poaching case, and the consequences need to be more serious.

Another 2018 case in Umatilla county with one person resulted in multiple charges including taking 4 bucks, 2 cow elk, wasting game and other related charges. We believe the penalties in such cases should rise above a misdemeanor. Copies of news stories related to both cases are included in my written testimony.

We have worked closely with the Oregon State Police and the Department of Fish and Wildlife in the development of this bill, and would like to thank them for their efforts to join us in addressing this very serious problem.

HB-3035 has the full support of OHA. This may be one of the most important pieces of wildlife legislation considered this year. Please give this bill your support, and a "DO PASS" recommendation.

More than 100 charges filed in NW poaching ring

ODFW seeks tougher laws against 'spree killing'

By:

- KTVZ.COM news sources

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(file photo)

SEATTLE (AP) - Prosecutors in Oregon have filed more than a hundred charges in an investigation of wildlife poaching that has spanned state lines and allegedly left dozens of animals shot illegally and sometimes left to rot.

The Wasco County District Attorney's office charged 11 people with misdemeanor wildlife crimes in that county Tuesday. Some of those charged in Oregon are also being prosecuted in Washington state for allegedly killing bears, deer, elk or bobcats illegally.

Members of the loose network often filmed or photographed their hunts, capturing gruesome scenes, including some in Washington that showed hunting dogs gnawing on dead or wounded bears. In some hunts, the alleged poachers left their prey to waste, collecting little meat or hide, investigators said.

Officials in both states have said the case is among the largest and most complex they've ever investigated, but still have not pinpointed any specific motives of the alleged poachers, other than to kill for thrill.

"Why would somebody do this? I don't fully understand," said Tim Schwartz, a Fish and Wildlife lieutenant with the Oregon State Police. "Just to see the killing, as a hunter myself, it's really upsetting."

The case began in November 2016, when Oregon State Patrol officers set up game cameras on national forest land near The Dalles. The motion-triggered cameras captured images of people in a truck shining a spotlight into the woods, then exiting the vehicle with rifles and head lamps,

according to Washington officers' investigative reports. The Oregon troopers later found a headless deer near the location where the truck had been photographed.

A few days later, the troopers recognized the truck and pulled it over. Cellphones seized from the suspects, which contained photos and videos of hunts as well as text messages, ultimately led Washington officers to more than 20 kill sites in Southwest Washington and several more suspects. Eight people were initially charged last fall in Skamania County with more than 190 counts of wildlife violations, including 33 felonies. More charges have been filed in other Washington counties since.

Meantime, Oregon officials continued to work the case. In January, officials charged nine people with wildlife crimes in Clatsop County, three of them with additional violations in Lincoln County and four of them with additional violations in Clackamas County. But most of the Oregon violations - some 120 misdemeanors in all - allegedly occurred in Wasco County.

Officials charged William Jarred Haynes, 24, with 45 counts; Erik Christian Martin, 24, with 42 counts; Joseph Allen Dills, 31, with 12 counts; Aaron Brian Hendricks, 35, with five counts; David R. McLeskey, 59, with four counts; Sierra Dills, 18, with four counts; Eddy Alvin Dills, 58, with two counts; Kimberly Kathrin Crape, 20, with two counts; Wyatt Keith, 17, with two counts; Aubri Nicole McKenna, 36, with one count; and Aaron Colby Hanson, 38, with one count.

Charges included unlawful taking or possession of wildlife (including deer, bear, bobcat, squirrel and cougar); waste of wildlife; hunting with an artificial light; use of dogs or bait to hunt (cougar and bear); criminal conspiracy; aiding or sharing in a wildlife violation; and altering, borrowing or loaning a license, tag or permit.

Unlike Washington, where spree killing is a felony, Oregon's wildlife violations are misdemeanors.

Schwartz said his agency would like to see Oregon's Legislature look at creating a felony statute for those who kill multiple animals in quick succession.

As investigators continue to pore over evidence, more charges could be coming in Washington.

"Our investigation is still ongoing," Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Sergeant Brad Rhoden told the Seattle Times. "There are still matters that we're looking into. By no means are we done with our field work."

Information from: The Seattle Times, <http://www.seattletimes.com>

Pendleton man arraigned for poaching in Umatilla County

Jan 10, 2018

PENDLETON — A Pendleton man was arrested Saturday on multiple misdemeanor poaching charges, including illegally taking four deer and two elk in Umatilla County.

Joseph Reide St. Pierre, 18, was the subject of a months-long investigation by the Oregon State Police Fish & Wildlife Division in Pendleton, according to a press release from the agency. OSP was first alerted to possible illegal hunting by St. Pierre in September 2017.

St. Pierre was booked into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, and arraigned Monday on counts relating to animals killed, illegal hunting practices and trespassing. The animals, killed as far back as the fall of 2016, include a large mule deer buck, three large whitetail bucks and two antlerless elk, according to the release.

Below are the charges he faces and the number of counts of each:

- Unlawful take of buck deer, closed season (4)
 - Unlawful take of antlerless elk (2)
 - Unlawful waste of game animal (2)
 - Hunting on the cultivated lands of another (3)
 - Unlawful discharge of a firearm across a public way (2)
 - Hunting prohibited method: Shotgun with shot restrictions
 - Exceeding annual elk bag limit
 - Second degree criminal trespass
 - Criminal trespass while in possession of a firearm
 - Unlawful discharge of a firearm from a motor vehicle
 - Hunting with the assistance of artificial light
 - Aiding another in committing wildlife violation, unlawful take of a buck deer (2)
- Anyone with more information that could help the investigation can call 1-800-452-7888 or talk to troopers Tom Juzeler or Ryan Sharp at 541-278-4090. The Oregon Hunters Association offers financial rewards of up to \$1,000 for tips that lead to arrests or citations of poachers.