



Oregon

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**To: The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources**



HB 3087

**Shannon Hurn, Deputy Director for Fish and Wildlife Programs
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife**

The department appreciates the opportunity to discuss House Bill 3087 with you today. House Bill 3087 directs the department to establish an anti-poaching awareness program, and appropriates money from the General Fund for this purpose.

Concern about poaching and its impact on fish and wildlife populations is fairly common in Oregon and across the western U.S. While there are few studies that focus specifically on the impact of illegal harvest on fish and wildlife populations, an Oregon study of radio-collared mule deer in south central Oregon showed alarming levels of poaching. The six-year study found that illegal harvest occurred at the same rate as legal harvest, accounting for 20 percent of known deer mortalities. Also troubling, 80 percent of poached animals were females, which are currently protected from harvest under hunting regulations. Poaching, especially of females, undermines Department efforts to restore mule deer populations which are below management objectives throughout their range in Oregon and across the Western U.S.

A budget note in HB 5010 (2017 session) directed the department to develop a report describing an approach for a broad anti-poaching campaign and strategies to deter poaching. The report was delivered to the Legislature in 2018. The direction in the budget note is similar to the goals outlined in HB 3087, such as increasing public awareness of poaching's impacts; increasing reporting of poaching; increasing detection; and promoting consistent prosecution and punishment.

The 2018 report, House Bill 5010 – Anti-poaching Campaign and Strategies outlined a suite of strategies to increase detection of poaching incidents and increase deterrence of poaching. The strategies overlap and reinforce each other. Increased awareness of poaching will lead to more reports and increased enforcement for violations. Increased enforcement, coupled with additional reporting, will increase the likelihood of being caught, which will deter some individuals from

poaching. Greater awareness of the impact of poaching will likely lead to more consistent prosecution and punishment.

To be effective, an anti-poaching awareness program will require a sustained, multi-year effort commitment with continued resources to identify and execute on media opportunities including advertising, social media and news coverage.

The report identified three funding levels and the work that might be accomplished under each funding level;

Level 1, \$1.08 million with the majority of that funding directed at awareness via advertising and earned media, with a smaller amount funding law enforcement detection equipment (trail cameras, wildlife enforcement decoys, etc.);

Level 2, \$4.09 million provided funding to expand the advertising campaign, increasing enforcement by hiring additional Oregon State Police troopers, and additional staffing at the Department of Justice to assist in prosecuting fish and wildlife violations;

Level 3, \$8.8 million significantly expanded the advertising and outreach effort to reach all Oregonians, additional law enforcement personnel, and expanded financial incentives to report poaching.

In the report General Fund was recommended to support this effort as reducing poaching benefits all Oregonians, not just hunters and anglers. HB 3087, if passed would appropriate General Fund for the anti-poaching awareness program.

This program is likely to result in additional workload for other agencies. Oregon State Police and other law enforcement agencies could face an increased caseload as they deal with a higher number of poaching reports to investigate due to more awareness of how to report poaching. Local district attorneys will also face increased workload due to more cases. That additional workload should be considered in establishing a funding level for an anti-poaching awareness program.

The Department appreciates your concern about poaching of fish and wildlife resources and desire for solutions to this issue, including HB 4046 which raised civil restitution fines and HB 3158 which allows people who report poaching to request Preference Points in lieu of a cash reward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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