



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

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House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Support for HB 2532

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Hunters Association (OHA) represents 10,000 sportsmen and women around the state, making us the largest state-centric hunting and conservation organization in Oregon. OHA's mission statement makes our focus clear: "protecting Oregon's wildlife, habitat, and hunting heritage." We have a long-established history of advocating for science-based management for our wildlife populations, both game and non-game, as well as crucial habitat around the state.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a degenerative neurological disease found in deer, elk, and moose. The disease is passed animal-to-animal, such as touching noses, and can also be spread by environmental contamination through urine, feces, or a carcass passing the infection into soil, food, or water. Upon infection, CWD has a 100% fatality rate although the disease progresses slowly, taking up to two years to become symptomatic. There are no known treatments or vaccines for CWD.

Prior to 2000, CWD was found in a relatively specific area of southern Wyoming and northern Colorado. Since that time, the disease has spread to 29 states and 2 Canadian provinces. Most recently, in 2021, multiple cases of CWD were confirmed in Idaho, within 25 miles of the Oregon border.

The threat CWD poses to Oregon's wildlife populations and habitat cannot be overstated and warrants a strong, proactive approach to sampling, testing, and research. Currently, all samples are sent to Colorado State University for testing, resulting in a lengthy turn-around time due to the number of tests run through that facility.

With the extremely close proximity of CWD to Oregon, the need for in-state testing facilities is greatly apparent. Establishing Oregon's testing process at the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (OVDL) at Oregon State University (OSU) is one of the most proactive steps the state can take toward CWD management. In addition to testing at OSU, increased Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) staff is needed to collect samples in the field, as well as record and process records and results in the ODFW Wildlife Lab.

Over the last few years, the Legislature has been instrumental in setting up success in our efforts against CWD. In 2017, the passage of the Road Kill Salvage bill put in place a framework that is now assisting in sample collection for CWD. Every salvaged animal must have the head turned in to ODFW, allowing each animal to be tested. In 2019, the Cervid Urine Product Ban was passed, restricting the threat of CWD spreading through these products. In 2021, the Mandatory Check Station bill was passed, which proved fortuitous with CWD found in Idaho the same year. The bill allowed ODFW to be extremely responsive to the threat by

establishing check stations to collect samples from harvested animals during the 2022 hunting season. The funding requests in HB 2532 continue this proactive approach to wildlife health.

HB 2532's request for General Fund investments to OSU and ODFW can be used as matching funds to capture federal funds available for CWD research. The Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Research and Management Act was recently included in the Omnibus Budget Bill which appropriated \$19.5 million toward CWD in 2023.

It is imperative to continue Oregon's proactive approach to wildlife and habitat health with the development of in-state testing, increased sample collection and processing, and increased research opportunities. Oregon's sportsmen and women are united in our request of the committee's support for HB 2532.

Thank you,
Amy Patrick
OHA Policy Director