

February 8, 2024

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water Committee:

Please Support HB 4061 – Directs the State Department of Agriculture to establish an elk damage prevention and compensation pilot program

My family and I farm on the eastern edge of the Coastal Mountain range, both on private land and on W.L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. Elk were non-existent in our local area until a small herd (15-20 head) came down out of the mountains into Finley in approximately 1990. They stayed on the refuge for the first ten years or so but as the herd grew and required more feed, offshoot herds began venturing into private lands.

Since that time, the local population has expanded to approximately 250 head. The main damage they cause to our grass seed crops is just prior to and during the harvest process. The destruction to ripe, easily shattered grass seed through trampling is difficult to quantify but substantial. They tend to cause compaction and drainage issues by congregating on wet areas of fields in winter.

Elk also can be very detrimental to certain crops such as crimson clover by overgrazing prior to and at time of bloom. Crops that they are most attracted to such as clovers, alfalfa, and corn are very difficult to fence effectively to deter damage.

Elk can also cause major damage to our traditional livestock fencing, and areas that elk regularly traverse require regular monitoring and repairs to maintain it.

The creation of this elk damage prevention and compensation pilot program through HB 4061 can help farms like ours with solutions to this growing challenge. Please support HB 4061.

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