

1 RESOLUTION NO. 2014-07-14

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3 A resolution relating to severe hoof disease in Southwest Washington elk,  
4 requesting the Washington Legislature and Gov. Jay Inslee to direct the  
5 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and other agencies to study the  
6 effects of herbicide application on our state forest land before culling elk and  
7 determine whether the state's forest practices are, on balance, enough to protect  
8 our natural environment, specifically our wildlife resources.  
9

10 WHEREAS, Clark County citizens have long-standing ties to the woods, rivers and  
11 wildlife and proud family traditions of fishing and hunting; and

12 WHEREAS, every year, hunters, fishers and wildlife watchers generate more than \$4.5  
13 billion in the state economy and support an estimated 60,000 jobs; and

14 WHEREAS, each fall, 100,000 elk hunters harvest approximately 7,000 animals in  
15 Washington and Washington has more hunters per elk than any other western state; and

16 WHEREAS, a management issue in at least two herds, including the state's largest, has  
17 increased to crisis proportions; and

18 WHEREAS, in a 2011 study, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
19 estimated that "limping elk were observed in 15 game management units (GMUs) encompassing  
20 3.4 million acres in Southwest Washington;" and

21 WHEREAS, in affected groups, 30-90 percent of animals, regardless of sex or age, were  
22 lame or had deformed hooves; and

23 WHEREAS, WDFW formed a working group to try to determine the cause of the  
24 problem so solutions could be found, but questions remain; and

25 WHEREAS, tests have been inconclusive, but evidence seems to point to a species of  
26 bacteria similar to one that causes hoof disease in domestic sheep and cattle; and

27 WHEREAS, the cause could be biological or environmental, or a combination of factors;  
28 and

29 WHEREAS, a recent study of summer habitat looked at elk across the western United  
30 States and found that elk “in the coastal and inland northwest regions,” where hoof disease is  
31 widespread, have the lowest body fat; and

32 WHEREAS, citizens continue to ask about the correlation between herbicide application  
33 and hoof disease; and

34 WHEREAS, WDFW has not yet conducted blood or toxicology testing for specific  
35 herbicide chemicals in elk harvested for study; and

36 WHEREAS, a recent report found that herbicide application after timber harvest in  
37 Southwest Washington is substantially reducing the quantity and quality of forage for elk; and

38 WHEREAS, the same study concluded “herbicides...substantially decrease elk forages  
39 and associated digestible energy during the first few years of stand replacement in western  
40 Washington;” and

41 WHEREAS, this conclusion has long been suspected by WDFW and is referenced in the  
42 Mount St. Helens Herd Management Plan; and

43 WHEREAS, the plan states, “The move from prescribed burning of clear-cut units prior  
44 to re-forestation to a more intensive herbicide treatment may be substantially impacting both  
45 quality and quantity of forage for elk on private and state-owned timberlands. Intensive chemical  
46 site preparation will result in less species diversity in clear cuts and a likely reduction in nutritive  
47 quality (B. Anderson personal communication 2000);” and

48 WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Pacific  
49 Cascades Region issues far more aerial herbicide forest practice application permits than any  
50 other region in the state; and

51 WHEREAS, the permits are issued for free with little or no public or agency input and no  
52 State Environmental Policy Act process, and

53 WHEREAS, these herbicide applications take place, in many cases, over thousands of  
54 acres for a three-year period, apparently with little or no information available to DNR, other  
55 state agencies or the public about the chemicals used, amounts of chemicals used or when the  
56 chemicals will be applied, and

57 WHEREAS, citizens have a right to know, and the Board of Clark County  
58 Commissioners charges the state with finding out, whether herbicide application is rendering elk  
59 more susceptible to hoof disease or unable to recover from it; and

60 WHEREAS, WDFW told this board in an April 16, 2013 letter that, “WDFW advises  
61 against harvesting or consuming the meat of an animal that appears sick;” and

62 WHEREAS, in a June 6, 2014 article, Dave Ware, game division manager, said in  
63 reference to WDFW’s plan to euthanize sick animals that, “department-qualified employees such  
64 as biologists and wildlife enforcement officers will do the shooting and the carcasses will be  
65 given to food banks;” and

66 WHEREAS, hunters and the public in Southwest Washington need to know whether  
67 these animals are safe for harvest and consumption; now, therefore be it resolved that,

68 The Board of Clark County Commissioners believes that state legislators and Gov. Jay  
69 Inslee should direct WDFW to research the impacts of herbicide application on our state’s forest  
70 land and any direct or indirect link it may have to hoof disease. The Board also urges that

71 WDFW continue to study hoof disease among Southwest Washington elk, in part by capturing  
72 and studying live elk afflicted with various stages of the disease before any culling of Southwest  
73 Washington herds is considered, and that WDFW make the results of this study available to the  
74 public. The Board recommends that the Legislature and Governor require collaboration among  
75 the Washington State Department of Ecology, the Washington State Department of Natural  
76 Resources and the Washington State Department of Agriculture to come to a conclusion in this  
77 matter.

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80 ADOPTED this 15<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2014.

Attest

  
Clerk to the Board

Approved as to form only:  
ANTHONY F. GOLIK  
Prosecuting Attorney

  
Christopher Horne  
Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FOR CLARK COUNTY

By:   
Tom Mielke, Chair

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Madore, Commissioner

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Edward L. Barnes, Commissioner