

RESOLUTION NO. 2014- 07-14

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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FOR CLARK COUNTY

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