

To: House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
From: Kate Ritley
Date: February 9, 2012
Re: Testimony on HB 4158

MEASURE: 34 HB 4158
EXHIBIT: 34
2012 SPECIAL SESSION H AG & NAT RES.
DATE: 2/9/2012 PAGES: 2
SUBMITTED BY: Kate Ritley

Chairs and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Kate Ritley,

My great-grandfather homesteaded in eastern Oregon back in the days when wolf packs roamed the range. By the time his son—my grandfather—claimed a homestead, wolves were gone. Bounty hunters and settlers, including members of my family, had shot, trapped, and poisoned Oregon's gray wolves to extinction.

To this day, my relatives make their living ranching cattle in eastern Oregon. The return of wolves means that, for the first time in decades, my family must readapt to the reality of ranching with wolves on the range. My little cousins are thrilled by the thought of seeing a wolf, but their parents are nervous about what it will mean for a business where it is already hard to make ends meet.

One thing I know is my family, and Oregon ranchers in general, are some of the most determined, resourceful and resilient folks on earth. Given practical guidelines and the proper tools, I do not doubt for a moment that Oregon livestock producers can successfully protect their livestock from wolves.

The truth is that protecting livestock from wolves means keeping wolves away from livestock to begin with. In neighboring Idaho, Lava Lake Lamb has experimented with tools to safeguard flocks in an area lousy with wolves. Lava Lake has adopted wolf-compatible ranching practices, from Range Riders patrolling the range on horseback to carefully disposing of bones and carcasses, and essentially eliminated livestock losses to wolves without killing any wolves. Yes, Lava Lake has taken on extra expenses to keep their livestock safe, but it is the cost of doing business. If ranchers in Idaho can do it, Oregon ranchers definitely can.

Inevitably, there will be some conflicts between wolves and livestock in Oregon, just as there will be disease, bad weather, cougar and coyote kills, and other heart-wrenching incidents that result in the loss of livestock. And in those rare cases when wolves kill livestock despite best efforts to keep wolves away, those ranchers will be compensated.

We need to protect the livelihoods of Oregon's ranchers. But, as ranchers know, we also have a responsibility to protect wildlife and be good land stewards. This includes protecting wolves and allowing them to return to their rightful Oregon home. Right now we only have 29 wolves in our entire state, way below historic numbers. I am vehemently opposed to HB 4158, which would undermine protections for wolves. To remove protection for a species when they only have four breeding pairs across an entire

state is simply absurd. I shudder to think Oregon could regress to the days of wolf hunts before wolves even have a foot in the door.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kate Ritley