

# Cascadia Wildlands

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Public Testimony of Cascadia Wildlands on House Bill 4158  
February 9, 2012

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SUBMITTED BY: Nick Cady

Chairs Clem, Esquivel, and members of the committee:

My name is Nick Cady, I'm the legal director of Cascadia Wildlands. We are a Eugene-based conservation organization representing approximately 6,000 members and supporters across the Northwest. I'm here today to testify against HB 4158, a bill that would specifically authorize the killing of endangered gray wolves in Oregon and dismantle the state Endangered Species Act. This bill would set terrible precedent that it is ok to relax environmental laws when they become inconvenient.

For background sake, by 1947 wolves were systematically eliminated from Oregon. In 1987, the Oregon legislature passed the Endangered Species Act and made the decision to list gray wolves as an endangered species. Through this listing, the state intended that wolves be conserved, and brought to a point where their populations are no longer in danger of failure. Today, we have approximately 29 wolves amongst 4 packs. As acknowledged by the Oregon Wolf Plan, this population is still in danger of failure.

It is important to initially recognize that this bill has been put forth because livestock producers want the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to kill wolves for them, and expend state resources doing so. It is still permissible and has always been permissible for a producer to kill a wolf that is predating on livestock and defend his property. In fact, there are a few dozen wolf kill permits currently in the hands of ranchers in Wallowa County.

It is also important to point out the scope of this issue. There are 1.3 million head of cattle in Oregon. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, 60,000 of these cows die every year. ODFW's Annual Report states that there were 27 livestock depredations potentially attributable to wolves in 2011. This is .05% of cattle deaths.

When Oregon passed its Endangered Species Act, it was explicitly recognized that recovering these species would have some cost and sacrifices would have to be made. These livestock deaths are part of that cost. Even though these depredations are concentrated largely in Wallowa County, the financial brunt of these losses is being spread evenly across the state. Governor Kitzhaber signed into law a compensation and proactive fund that reimburses ranchers for lost livestock. It also provides funding to ranchers for various measures which would prevent wolf-livestock conflict.

HB 4158 is an inappropriate, over-dramatic response to an insignificant problem, a problem that is largely the result of irresponsible husbandry practices. Oregon wolves were initially drawn to ranches because livestock carcasses were piled up and left on the range and afterbirth left on site after delivery. Wolf attractants like these were the source of conflict in Oregon.

Our organization is currently in negotiations with the state to create new rules that improve and strengthen the state's ability to manage wolves and also encourage responsible husbandry practices. HB 4158 is an attempt to derail this process and undermine Oregon's Endangered Species Act.

In closing, I encourage you to oppose HB 4158 as we continue to work with the state of Oregon to address the use of lethal control of wolves in Oregon. Circumventing the bedrock statutes like the Endangered Species Act when it is convenient is not inline with wildlife laws and the vast majority of Oregonians who support wolf recovery in our state.

Thank you for your time today.

Nick Cady  
Legal Director  
Cascadia Wildlands