

Testimony In Opposition to HB 3452: House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources:
Hearing April 16, 2013

Dear Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee

I value nature and the lives of wolves who are making a fragile recovery in our state.

7000 years ago they emerged as the dominant social carnivore, a remarkable evolutionary achievement! Northwest cultures did once revere and respect the wolf as a hunter, as a loyal, familial animal, as both a leader and a member of a "tribe", as an animal of great power, independence and charismatic spirit. There was wise co-existence with wolves.

And ecology teaches us that wolves maintain healthy populations of game animals, limit coyote populations, provide other wildlife with food, and scientists have concluded that without wolves, other species overpopulated and depleted natural resources, such as collapsing vegetation and streams which affect elk, beaver, bird and fish. Wolves are highly complex, sentient beings, sensitive to pain and fear and in their recent return to Oregon are making every attempt to remain a successful member of their ecosystem.

Bill 3452 is misguided for so many reasons.

Bill 3452, practically speaking, gives unrestricted license to kill wolves. It allows anyone to shoot all wolves without permit or any oversight, or investigative process prior to their death if such wolves are "believed (in the mind of the beholder) to be a "nuisance" or pose a "public health threat", to have caused "damage" in the past or present or to avoid "grave injury to any person."

First, there is essentially no risk of human fatality due to wolves historically. There has been no fatality by wolves in the years since reintroduction in the Rockies. There has been only one documented wolf fatality in North America in the last one hundred years. There are meanwhile hundreds of people killed by dogs, a far greater threat of a dog harming humans than wolves (www.dogsbit.org/dog-bit-statistics-fatalities-2011.php). We don't kill dogs on sight just because they might attack. Wolves tend to stay away from humans.

Wolf predation of livestock in Oregon is very minimal.

Bill 3452 encourages poaching; it enables unwarranted killing. The bill has vague terms which set up a disastrous approach to these animals and the worst kind of oppression. This bill gives virtually anyone the right to act as judge, jury and executioner, and to shoot a wolf on the spot. Unilateral freedom to kill wolves unhinged from real proof of just cause or other checks and balances opens the door to widespread abuses ,and sacrifices the rightless and powerless to those with the rights and power.

Given the mythology people harbor about wolves, ignorance and misunderstanding of the species, old hatreds, fears and biases or just a callousness toward life, this bill allows wolves to be killed for what humans believe their acts to be. It opens the door for a lot of mistaken identities (wolves) connected to mistaken or fancied acts resulting in wolves dying for wrong

and inadequate reasons. The bill's content is a reckless and misguided dynamic to set for one species toward another. Instead of focusing on killing wolves; we should be finding ways to co-exist and share this landscape.

By protecting wolves we may be finding a better way to live with them. "During the past two years, prohibited from killing wolves in Oregon, livestock losses plummeted with the use of nonlethal conflict prevention methods. At the same time in Idaho where wolves were aggressively killed, livestock predation increased by 75%. Range riding, guard dogs, husbandry practices for calving, proper fencing of unfenced land, removing and burying dead livestock and bones and moving the weak, vulnerable and injured animals to protected areas lowers predation"(Amaroq Weiss, The Center for Biological Diversity).

" In Chile where the killing of cougars is outlawed, birthing sheds are effective. In Europe the use of guard dogs with shepherds significantly reduces predation losses. In Minnesota, farmers can adopt measures that reduce predator opportunity in order to qualify for state livestock compensation. Farmers and state officials form agreements around specific measures to reduce or eliminate future losses, if depredation has occurred tied to future compensation agreements" (George Wuerthner, Livestock and Predators, 2010).

These ranching practices are proven effective mechanisms and make sense in policy and practice.

Vote no on bill 3452. Killing wolves needlessly is not good policy.

Indiscriminate killing of predators may actually increase livestock conflicts, the opposite of what ranchers expect. Killing wolves disrupts the social cohesion of the pack upon which all members totally depend. "Cohesive, large, packs with experienced, knowledgeable leaders maintain territory and teach the young the hunting skills that have stabilized this predator/prey (elk, deer) relationship for eons that keep the unskilled away from livestock. Killing wolves often leads to more depredation and more calls for predator control" (George Wuerthner: Livestock and Predators).

Wolves should not have to live and die according to the wishes of one segment of Oregon's culture. We should turn our attention to a better way to prevent conflict. Oregonians can do better. Vote no on HB 3452.

I have worked as a teacher and in business and recently went back to school to study Environmental Ethics, Ecology and the Environmental Sciences at Portland State University. I spent a month in Yellowstone National Park in 2012 in lecture and field studies of wolves and bears. Nature has many values worth preserving; surely protecting the lives of the wild is one of them.

Sincerely,
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