

OPPOSE HB2624

Oregon, like many states, appears to believe that catering to hunters and ranchers is a good idea when the topic is apex predators. However, a look at science regarding the need for these predators to maintain healthy habitats and wildlife refutes the common assertion that there are “too many predators,” or that “they are eating all the game,” or the hyperbole of “they’ll attack our children.”

Rural counties, especially, have an inflated sense of worth, even though they are heavily dependent on their urban counterparts to fund activities within their counties. The rural counties will tout local rule, attempting to deny those who pay the bills any say in management of the public-trust wildlife that resides within the county. Urban citizens support the rural “way of life” with an expectation that their support will help to maintain open spaces and abundant wildlife in ecologically effective numbers. The urban taxpayers work in less than pastoral settings, put up with stress, congestion and crime, and have jobs and companies subject to intense competition and outsourcing. That a rancher takes the urban workers’ hard-earned tax dollars to support a life-style choice, all while complaining that city-folk have no right to vote on wildlife issues, is disingenuous at best.

For the 12 months ending March 2013, of the \$498 Million Corporate Excise Taxes collected by Oregon, NAICS sector 11, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting paid \$4.3M, about 0.8% of the total. Hunting and ranching are likely a small component of the total. Cattle and calves are 14% of Agricultural receipts. As a comparative, the Lodging Tax brought in \$12.4M.

Animal Production (NAICS 112) had covered wages of \$106,112,341 of which Beef Ranching and Feedlots wages were \$30,576,309 or 29% from 1,122 jobs. Oregon’s total payroll is \$72.7 Billion, so beef creates 0.04% (0.0004) of Oregon’s payroll, and 0.07% of its covered employment jobs.

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Cattle Death Report for 2010 indicates total losses of cattle and calves in Oregon as 55,000 head. Thirty-eight hundred (6.9%) were from predation. The balance of 51,200 head were lost to lameness or injury, weather, calving, respiratory, digestive, and other diseases and non-predator causes. Cougars and bobcats amounted to 9.4% of the predation losses, or about 0.7% of all cattle losses. Only 13% of Oregon’s livestock producers remove livestock carcasses as a preventative measure.

Certainly, these numbers do not indicate a runaway cougar population marauding livestock, but indicate a need for better husbandry.

According to the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Related Recreation, total wildlife associated expenditures in Oregon were \$2.66 Billion. Fishing contributed \$640 Million (24%), hunting contributed \$239M (9%), and wildlife-watching came in at \$1.7 Billion—seven (7) times hunting, and more than 2.5 times beef and calves receipts of \$633M. Wildlife watchers spent \$275M on food and lodging, in Oregon.

Forty percent (40%) of Oregonians, 16 and older, watch wildlife. Anglers are 12%, and hunters constitute 6% of Oregon’s population. Hound hunters and trophy hunters are a small fraction of the six percent.

Why the Legislature and ODFW cater to this small group does not make fiscal sense, especially given the propensity of eco-tourists to avoid states with unpopular hunting practices.

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Sources:

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