

## TESTIMONY of JANET CONKLIN REGARDING HB 3452, AS AMENDED

HB 3452, as amended, still advances a policy that threatens the continued existence of all wolves immediately and through their future generations in Oregon. I believe it is a travesty that the existing tiny population of 46 wolves will be subject to killing under vacuous, poorly conceived rules for the benefit of those who have externalized their own business risks and operating costs, and seek to evade responsibility for those by demonizing and killing this small non-human population. This bill is wrong in many ways. It should be voted down as it stands.

The responsibility for livestock safety properly rests on the owner of the livestock. There are non-lethal means of protecting livestock that have been proven effective in wolf-inhabited territory over long periods of time. They are not without some economic cost, but those costs should properly be a part of the rancher's business overhead and operating expenses.

Much of the problem of conflict between livestock and wolves is due to the ranchers' evasion of this responsibility and use of poor animal husbandry practices. This bill should be amended or voted down if it does not address and require higher livestock management standards; in fact as it is now written, it expressly approves the status quo and allows permitless killing of wolves by those "engaging in regular and ordinary livestock management practices (Section 2:3:a)". One such practice is that cattle and sheep are routinely left to graze over vast acreages of land, unfenced, without human or guard dog supervision, leaving the door wide open to natural predators. If livestock owners fail or decline to provide nonlethal protection of their stock from natural predators, it should be at their own risk.

The bill permits a rancher to kill a wolf without a permit that is "biting, "causing damage-harm" to or in the act of "chasing" dogs or livestock. There are major flaws in allowing killing based on these guidelines. How is a "chase" defined, determined, verified, or investigated? Could any inadvertent proximity of a wolf to livestock constitute "causing harm;" and if cattle simply move and shift, can that be construed as chasing? How does one establish evidence of such events as "chasing" or "causing harm" if the shooter is the only person who witnesses the act? HB 3452 relaxes the conditions under which a wolf may be killed to an unacceptable degree. Who can investigate to determine whether a "chase" occurred? It is simply not ethical or reasonable to kill within such problematic, flawed guidelines. Because there is no requirement to verify a "chase" etc. and the wolf is dead; it leaves the stated grounds for shooting open to fabrication.

Bill 3452 as amended escalates a disastrous approach to wolves as it is permissive of less rather than more restraint in killing of wolves by removing the existing required permit for such killing and relaxing the conditions that may give rise to a right to shoot, and the stated circumstances are of such a nature that they open the door to opportunistic, unjust killing, and mistaken wolf killings in questionable conflicts. This part of the law as

amended is much worse for wolves. There is no objective standard for determining the reasonableness of the “belief” of the acts mentioned, or even whether those acts were caused by the wolf or wolves killed.

Given that wolves are proven to have minimal impact on overall livestock losses, this bill should be voted down as it is written.

In 2005 there were an estimated 1,300,000 cattle in Oregon. About 50,000 of them died because of weather, disease, birthing, and causes unrelated to wolves. Far more cattle and sheep are killed by domestic dogs than by wolves. The number of livestock lost to wolf predation is miniscule, virtually negligible, in relation to the losses to other causes.

The food chain works for us and animals to eat what is available. If livestock are released, as is common livestock management practice, to eat unsupervised over hundreds or thousands of acres in remote areas, including public BLM unfenced lands, and if an animal dies, that death is far more likely to have been one of the 50,000 deaths due to other causes rather than a wolf attack. The bill states that a wolf can be killed without a permit if found “biting” livestock. Does this condition mean biting a live animal or biting a carcass? If dead livestock and bones are not quickly removed and properly disposed of, all kinds of wildlife utilize the carcass as a food source for their survival. If a wolf is discovered feeding on (“biting”) a carcass, it is entirely possible, indeed likely, that the animal died from some other cause, and the wolf is simply scavenging its remains. Could that circumstance be considered reason to kill? This bill effectively establishes a “presumption of guilt” against the wolf, without proof through investigation and evidence that a wolf has in fact killed the animal.

If ranchers argue they do not see what kills their animals, it is a symptom of lack of appropriate supervision of their herds. Depredation can be determined under previous plans through a reasonable process of investigation and proof. Killing without a permit for just being in the area is an insufficient basis for taking an endangered animal’s life; writing laws to kill with loose language open to ambiguous conditions can result in unsubstantiated claims that result in gratuitous killing.

This bill states a wolf may be taken now for looser conditions beyond depredation if the wolf and/or is “believed to be causing “damage or harm”. No permit is required, leaving a killing decision solely to the subjective intent and state of mind of the shooter. Since cattlemen as a group support wolf killing, it is reasonable to assume that they will take advantage of the permissiveness they are striving to obtain through this bill. It opens the door to a lot of mistaken identities (even when depredation occurs, how can one be sure which wolf or wolves to hold accountable) or fancied acts resulting in wolves dying for wrong or inadequate reasons.

Wolves, a free, undomesticated animal, without knowing, run this gauntlet that we have set up for them without any recourse. Do not allow this law to pass without considering the lack of fairness or ethics in this kind of killing of another living species.

In fact killing wolves does not stop depredation; it has been shown to accelerate conflict and attacks on livestock. Killing key members of wolf packs is known to cause dispersal, reduced capacity to hold territory where natural prey resides, a greater tendency for younger wolves (who are less experienced hunters) without their elder pack leaders to attack animals other than their natural prey (elk, deer), exacerbating livestock conflict. HB 3452 takes us in the wrong direction.

As civilized humans, we can all see the injustice of a law under which the executioner is also the judge and jury. I am opposed to the shooting of wolves by hunters or ranchers in general; I think the answer is tolerance and the use of proven, long term non-lethal measures that can and do effectively reduce or eliminate this conflict.

If one could “see feelingly” all the risks wolves must endure to live running the gauntlet of injury and human predation, all the loyalty and cooperation of a brilliant group of wolves as they unerringly give of themselves to each other's welfare and to remain a successful member of their landscape and their familial group, we would question and challenge our readiness to destroy them, particularly as humans have the wherewithal to come up with solutions that protect cattle and let wolves live.

It is an inconvenient truth and cheaper economically to turn to the bullet instead of ourselves, but in the end we need to get back to bigger issues of what a healthy relationship to non-human species means and how we can build stories and behavior that neither maligns wolves, nor takes their lives, a different storytelling that increases the status of wolves in our value system and reflects a moral obligation to tolerate and co-exist with this species with whom we share this living experience on earth.

This country killed hundreds of thousands of wolves in the last century and a half. We have spent well over 100 million dollars since the 1970's to redeem ourselves from that shameful history by reintroducing wolves into our landscape and setting up rules to assure their recovery. Even now there are miniscule numbers of them compared to earlier populations, and they occupy only 5% of their former natural range. And now, under state management with the pressure from cattlemen and those who like to kill for sport, we are killing the wolves we are trying to restore. It is a senseless and misguided endeavor.

With such lax conditions and restrictions on killing, innocent wolves will surely die. Failure of ranchers to remove carcasses increases the conditions for depredation exponentially. Any wolf bill needs to specify the most effective “non-lethal” methods that must be used to co-exist with other predators, such as fencing, lighting, a human presence or a pack of guard dogs. “A study in Europe found that failure to remove carcasses increased the chances for future depredation by 55 times. Another study of wolf predation on domestic sheep in the French Alps found that confining or simply gathering sheep at night in the presence of 5 livestock guarding dogs prevented most kills that would have occurred with free-ranging sheep (George Wuerthner, Ecologist).

If you enact this bill, you will have given state sanction to unwise and poor husbandry practices by ranchers which make conflict with carnivores (eagles, dogs, cougars, wolves) more likely, and accepted the practice of externalizing the cost of doing business by killing highly endangered animals rather than by taking reasonable non-lethal measures to protect livestock.

“In the end, the best way to reduce human conflicts with predators as well as realize the ecological benefits of having top predators widely distributed across the landscape, is to require better husbandry practices from livestock producers and to stop predator control and sport hunting that disrupts predator social ecology.”(George Wuerthner, Ecologist) If consumers pay a little more for their beef because ranchers are finally paying for the cost of consistent human and guard dog presence and the practice of containing cattle rather than spreading them out, we can co-exist with other species and have a balanced and biologically diverse landscape.

Any bill allowing wolves to be more readily killed by livestock owners must address the underlying issues regarding upgraded husbandry practices. Such a bill ought to require and specify good husbandry requirements that must be met prior to any wolf killing, including but not limited to: burying all bones and carcasses immediately, removing the vulnerable and pregnant, providing birthing sheds, fencing owned land sheltering cattle or herding them together near humans at night and the use of the proven most effective, long term non-lethal preventions such as human shepherds and guard dogs.

With the strong core values for nature and the wild that prevail here in Oregon, we need to change direction from bills about killing to methods of co-existence. Because of the issues and concerns raised in this letter, it is reasonable to ask you to oppose this bill as it stands. I urge you to take a strong stance on protecting Oregon’s endangered wolves.

Respectfully submitted,

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My experience with wolves, other large predators and endangered species includes;

- Several academic courses and field studies of wolves and large predators in 2012 and 2013 in Yellowstone National Park ,
- Study of Environmental Ethics applied in the context of our Pacific Northwest native species and Ecology at Portland State University,

- Volunteer service with Wildlife Africa Conservation Teams assisting in a research project to conserve endangered wild dogs, elephants and lions in South Africa in 2012, and
- Personal observation of wolves and bears and their social ecology and behavior in Alaska, British Columbia and the Rockies.