

Raszka Shelley

From: aj.saintm@gmail.com on behalf of AJ <aj@coastrangeforestwatch.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2015 12:31 AM
To: Raszka Shelley
Subject: OPPOSE ANTI-PREDATOR BILLS

Please submit these comments as testimony for public hearing on House Bills 3515, 2050, 3140, 3188, and 3514. I am opposed to these five bills for the following reasons:

HB 3515 declares an "emergency" requiring that wolves NEVER receive protection under the state Endangered Species Act. According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, approximately 114 livestock or domestic animals are confirmed to have been killed by wolves in Oregon from the late 1990s to December 2014. Data from USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service indicates that there were approximately 1,300,000 cattle (not including other livestock) in Oregon as of January 2015. Wolf depredation of livestock is hardly an "emergency."

Furthermore, it is short-sighted and irresponsible to bar an entire species from state protection indefinitely. The state should consult biologists, not cattle ranchers, to establish more effective wolf conservation policies.

HB 2050 would exempt certain counties from state law prohibiting hound-hunting of cougars. Hound-hunting is an unnecessary and cruel practice that endangers wild predators as well as domestic dogs. Oregon voters already decided TWICE not to allow this practice in our state. In 2014, ODFW spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy told The Bulletin, "We haven't had a case of a wild cougar attacking a person in Oregon." EVER. There is absolutely no need to put wild cougars or domestic dogs at greater risk just because some Oregonians have seen cougars in what has always been their natural territory.

HB 3140 proposes a waste of taxpayer dollars to establish a "task force to study whether local predator damage control districts would benefit rural areas of the state." The grizzly bear, gray wolf, lynx, and wolverine have already been extirpated from the state, or occur in extremely low numbers compared to natural, historic populations. Most of the habitat that was historically used by predator species in Oregon is now used by humans, much of it for cattle. Cows are NOT native to Oregon, or even to North America. Bears, wolves, lynxes, wolverines and mountain lions are. Please do not spend my hard-earned money on bad science.

HB 3188 proposes a similarly unnecessary, wasteful directive for the state Department of Agriculture and state Forestry Department to "study whether to establish a procedure to set up predator control districts in the state to control harm to resource uses from predators." Native predators ARE natural resources to be protected from harm. Not only are these species an essential part of Oregon's natural heritage, but they also play critical roles in their ecosystems and food webs. Without apex predators, the natural order of an ecosystem will collapse. If people are upset that the natural actions of native predator species are curbing their profits, maybe they should outsmart predators with safe and humane methods of protection, instead of shooting or trapping whatever threatens a bit of their money.

HB 3514 continues and greatly expands (nearly QUADRUPLES) a tax credit that was supposed to sunset, which livestock owners can obtain for losses attributed to wolves. In order to qualify, the loss only needs to be deemed a "probable" wolf-caused loss, and this call can be made by a sheriff or deputy sheriff (instead of by experts in evaluating causes of livestock deaths.)

First: with Oregon schools, health care, and employment rates struggling to right themselves, throwing more money at a half-baked plan like this is the last thing we need.

Second: If this tax credit continues at all, it should be only for wolf-caused losses confirmed by experts, not whichever law enforcement officer happens to be on duty.

Third: Taxpayer money would be far better spent instituting non-lethal tools and strategies to prevent conflicts between wolves and livestock.

All of these bills disregard science and the sentiments of the people of Oregon. Throw them out now.

Amanda St.Martin
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