



MEASURE HB 3515
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SUBMITTED BY: Quinn Read

April 16, 2015

Oregon State Legislature
House on Agriculture and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oregon Wild and Sierra Club Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 3515

Dear Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Oregon Wild and Sierra Club's tens of thousands of members and supporters across Oregon, we would like to express our opposition to HB 3515, which would prohibit the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission from including the gray wolf on the list of threatened or endangered species. HB 3515 seeks to bypass an established public process, sets a dangerous precedent for involving the legislature in the management of every species in the state, and distracts this committee from its important work. For these reasons, we encourage the Committee to oppose HB 3515.

The aim of HB 3515 is to circumvent an established public process for evaluating the status of wolves in Oregon. State law tasks the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission with important decisions about listing and delisting species as threatened or endangered. These decisions are based on the best available science -- including scientific studies, biological data and information collected by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The process for delisting gray wolves was agreed upon under the terms of the Oregon Wolf Management and Conservation Plan. Our organizations have elected to place our trust in that process and to express our views through that process. Further, our members and supporters count on public and transparent processes to make sure their voices are heard when matters of our natural heritage are at stake. HB 3515 bypasses the well established process for listing and delisting wolves and shuts the door to the public in favor of special interests.

This bill, and the emergency it seeks to declare, is also effectively moot. In accordance with the wolf plan, the Commission has already begun the process for delisting wolves. In fact, a biological assessment has already been submitted by ODFW staff making recommendations to begin the delisting process for the Commission to consider on April 24, 2015. By taking action on this matter, the Commission has negated the need for HB 3515, as well as any argument that an emergency declaration is warranted.

The Legislature is not the appropriate body for determining whether species should be listed or delisted. Politics and the whims of special interests should not substitute for the best available science when it comes to protecting our native wildlife. Managing our state's wildlife is the role and responsibility of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and decisions regarding listing or delisting species are entrusted to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. These entities have the necessary scientific, policy and legal expertise to make these decisions, and the processes to ensure full compliance with the law and opportunities for public participation.

Nor should the Legislature be eager to get entangled in the management of every species in Oregon. Doing so on an ad hoc basis at the behest of special interest groups creates unnecessary conflict and distraction. This Committee has a great deal of important work to do, and unnecessary and redundant bills get in the way of that work. We believe that the appropriate response is to respect the existing process and decision making body, and to oppose HB 3515.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Respectfully,

Quinn Read
Oregon Wild

Rhett Lawrence
Sierra Club