



Oregon Farm Bureau Supports HB 4040 - Ratification of Wolf Delisting
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee
February 3, 2016

The Oregon Farm Bureau supports ratification of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission's decision to delist the gray wolf. The Oregon Farm Bureau was a strong advocate for delisting the gray wolf at the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, and this legislation is critical to fully implementing that decision.

By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau is a voluntary, grassroots, nonprofit agricultural organization representing Oregon's farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arena. As Oregon's largest general agriculture organization, its primary goal is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for its members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry as a whole. Today, Oregon Farm Bureau represents over 7,000 member families professionally engaged in the industry and has a total membership of over 60,000 families. Many of these members are sheep and cattle ranchers who are directly impacted by the gray wolf reintroduction in Oregon, and who have suffered losses due to wolves in Oregon.

As you are aware, Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan called for reviewing whether to delisting wolves from the OESA when Oregon reaches the conservation objective of four breeding pairs for three consecutive years in eastern Oregon. This objective was met in 2014. ODFW's Biological Status Review, found that factors related to wolf health, habitat, dispersal, habitat connectivity, and wolf survival all indicated a healthy and growing population that is unlikely to decline in the near-term. Based on the findings in the Biological Status Review and available data, the decision to delist the wolves was scientifically sound. The Commission correctly found that there is simply no need to continue to extend OESA protection to the gray wolf as its population continues to increase.

The groups that oppose wolf delisting would like to see protections in place for wolves beyond the wolf management plan, and are using a legal challenge to the delisting decision as the vehicle to achieve that goal. Their methods are misplaced. The state will evaluate wolf management in Oregon its its upcoming wolf management plan review, and the opposition groups will be part of that effort. They will have the opportunity through that process to advocate for changes in management they feel are needed, and will be able to raise any concerns with current management through that process.

From a policy perspective, it is important that the state legislature ratify the decision of the Fish and Wildlife Commission. In delisting, the Commission chose to honor the commitment it made to Oregon producers in the Wolf Plan that wolves would not remain listed as their populations recovered and grew, and forced all the parties who had agreed to the current wolf management plan to honor their commitments as well. The promise that commitments would be honored was a significant factor in producer's willingness to honor the Wolf Plan despite the significant cost of wolf depredation to their

operations. Delisting is a critical part of long-term wolf management under the Wolf Plan, and is warranted as populations continue to grow.

Oregon producers have honored the agreement with the state to follow the Wolf Plan. Delisting of the wolves fully implements Phase II of the Wolf Plan, respects the commitments made to all of the stakeholders who participated in the Wolf Plan, and ultimately provides greater flexibility to the state in making long-term management decisions regarding wolves. Oregon Farm Bureau urges the legislature to support this legislation, and ratify the Commissions decision to honor its commitments and delist the wolves once the delisting criteria were met.

If you have questions about this testimony, please contact Mary Anne Nash at maryanne@oregonfb.org or 541-740-4062.