

Chair Edwards and members of the committee,

Our names are Buck and Chelsea Matthews. We live on a remote cattle ranch in Northeast Oregon with our three kids, ages 9, 7 & 3.

At the end of last summer, a wolf attacked two of our dogs. Our best working dog, Scooter, survived but will never work again. The other, Tom, has recovered and remains our favorite family dog. After the attack, we had a large black wolf hang out around our home for a couple of weeks. Since then we have lost two young dogs- no sign or trace of what happened to them. The most concerning part about seeing the wolf was realizing he was not at all afraid of us. He had no reason to be- the wolves have had free reign and don't even know we're a threat.

This attack changed the way we live. We live on a 10,000 acre cattle ranch and when the dogs are home, we have to keep them kenneled up. More importantly, our kids are country kids in every sense. They not only go to a one room school house, but when they're at home, they love to be outside— hiking, building forts, playing with the dogs and loving the wild and beautiful place we live. They're independent and capable kids and we intentionally live in a way that should allow them to be. Since the attack we can't let them play out of eyesight, which at our house doesn't take long- we live at the top of a canyon and there are draws and hills all the way around us.

Like a lot of ranchers in eastern Oregon have been pretty quiet on the wolf debate. Not because we don't care, not because we haven't had losses, but because we've followed the rules. We've waited for the numbers to be high enough so the wolves are delisted. Not only has that time come, but the time has come where, as parents, we can't be quiet. We aren't willing to risk letting our kids be out of sight for fear of a wolf attack- that isn't a statistic or a crazy fear, it's the reality we are living with right now. We're not vicious wolf killers. We don't have the time or desire to go out and hunt down wolves, but we do believe we should be able to keep our family safe. We spend most of our time trying to keep our heads above water with work on the ranch.

There is a lot of talk about protecting these wolves. Call us crazy, but we believe our kids as well as our animals deserve to be protected; delisting was a step in doing that. Now, if HB 4040 is passed to ensure the delisting, we can move forward with the wolf plan. It is my sincere hope that we can learn to live with the presence of the wolves and adapt to their presence , but we need to be able to trust that we have the tools to do that- delisting in conjunction with HB 4040 is a step forward.

Sincerely,
Buck & Chelsea Matthews
Enterprise, OR