

Chair Edwards thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Senate Environment & Natural Resources committee regarding HB 4040. My name is George Rollins and I manage the Pine Valley Ranch properties in Northeast Oregon. Due to prior commitments, I am unable to attend the hearing in Salem.

As a Northeastern cattle producer ranching in the Halfway and Halfway area, we have first-hand knowledge and experience with the wolves in Oregon. Our first confirmed depredation occurred in 2012 and we have experienced significant losses since then. It is clear from our perspective that the wolf management program as established by the ODFW Commission has been a success. In our area, wolf sightings are now more frequent and in areas where they have not previously been seen. In our specific ranching operations, we are now dealing with the presence of two packs, the Imnaha (OR 33) and south snake (OR 36) packs.

As the committee is aware, livestock producers were not supporters of the wolf program. However, we came to the table and agreed to follow the guidelines, as everyone else involved did as well, and agreed to accept the science and data collected by ODFW as parameters for the three phases of the wolf management plan. The Oregon wolf management plan is a success as was testified by US Fish & Wildlife officials at the November ODFW hearings.

While the wolves have thrived, livestock producers have suffered. We have suffered not only economic losses, which can be documented as to the direct affect upon profitability, but there are losses and stresses which are much more difficult to quantify. Each time we send cattle to our forest grazing areas we wonder which ones will not return. With wolf sightings increasing in our valley, we worry about the safety our horses and dogs. The emotional stresses to humans are real and significant. They may be difficult to measure but none the less real. We also see changes in the behavior and performance of our cattle. OSU research has documented changes in the cortisol levels of cattle when exposed to wolves. Exposure results in reduced weight gain and decreased conception rates. Effects such as these are indirect and more difficult to quantify. We have and will continue to alter our management plans to try and adapt to the continued presence of wolves. Losses will likely continue, but we hope as the packs expand to new territories we may possibly see some decreases in depredations.

In our world one of our mantras is that your word is your bond. It is paramount that if you say you are going to do something, we expect you to follow thru and do it. We were pleased to see that the ODFW commissioners and staff did exactly that when they recommended and then approved delisting the wolf in Eastern Oregon. The staff diligently collected the data, analyzed the data and determined the wolf population had grown to the point where delisting was appropriate. The commission followed thru by supporting their staff and doing the right thing by delisting the wolf in eastern Oregon.

However, the wolf advocates which agreed to the same terms of the wolf management plan, filed a lawsuit against the ODFW. Their credibility must be questioned as they refuse to accept the scientific data collected and analyzed by ODFW wildlife biologists. Now ODFW will forced to spend precious resources defending the data and results. Oregon livestock producers feel that it is important the legislature do the right thing and support its agency charged with managing the wolf. By passing HB 4040 the legislators will officially delist the wolves in eastern Oregon by state statute. While nothing will change regarding the wolf management plan with passage of HB 4040, it will put the importance of official state law behind the de-listing of wolves in Eastern Oregon. Passage of HB 4040 will not stop lawsuits from the those who refuse to accept the true successes of the wolf management plan, but it will help keep the wolf management plan on tract and moving to the phase 3 as the wolf population continues to grow.

Across the country, citizens have lost faith in government at all levels in large part because they feel government does not serve them or treat them fairly. Too often, officials set goals for programs then change or decide to ignore the parameters to satisfy vocal special interests. Actions such as these tend to inflame the mistrust of government by her people. We ask that the committee bring HB 4040 to the entire body and work hard to assure passage thru the legislative process and confirm delisting in eastern Oregon by state statute.

Thank you

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