

March 6th 2019



Members of the House Natural Resource Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Written testimony on HB 2841 (protecting sensitive wildlife location information)

Dear Chair Witt, Vice Chair Gorsek, Vice Chair Sprenger and Honorable Members of the House Natural Resource Committee

My name is Dr Sristi Kamal and I am the Senior Representative for Defenders of Wildlife in Oregon. Defenders of Wildlife is a national wildlife conservation organization that focuses on conserving imperiled and native species and their habitats and has 1.8 million members nationwide. Today, I would like to take this opportunity to express our support for House Bill 2841 (HB 2841) and discuss why such a measure is timely and necessary in Oregon.

Oregon has one of the most diverse natural landscapes in the country, which is why the state's biodiversity is exceptional. Many ecologically and anthropologically important species call Oregon their home, some of which are at risk due to threats such as habitat destruction, fragmentation, overexploitation and climate change. This is where Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) comes in. The agency's goal is to conserve these species — help in their recovery, and balance their habitat needs and population trends with human use and consumption. ODFW maintains data pertaining to the exact location of individuals of many species through equipment such as radio collars, as well as the location of sensitive habitat use such as breeding grounds, nesting or denning sites and spawning grounds. Such data is essential for the agency to make critical decisions related to the recovery and management of Oregon's wildlife. However, in doing so, the agency puts these individuals and their population at risk of being harmed or harassed simply because we chose to monitor them.

Poaching in Oregon is a growing problem and public access to sensitive location information of wildlife makes them very vulnerable to poaching and other harm or harassment that have direct impact on their breeding, nurturing and hunting behaviors. In case of species that reuse their breeding or nesting sites throughout their life, the current policy compromises their safety year after year and in case of species that tend to stay in groups or aggregate during certain life stages, identifying the location of one individual could compromise tens or hundreds of other individuals. Additionally, wildlife research and monitoring require a large investment of taxpayer dollars by ODFW. Therefore, failure to protect such data not only mean failure of a research project or setting inaccurate management goals but also loss of radio collars and other such equipment is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to support this bill as HB 2841 is a practical and responsive solution to Oregon's growing poaching problem and a discrete measure to protect Oregon's natural resources. By supporting this bill, you will help further wildlife conservation and ethical hunting in the state while curbing the growing problem of poaching. The bill lays out the type of sensitive wildlife location data and the conditions under which ODFW will have the discretion to determine the extent or scale of such data to release without compromising the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals of a species.

When it comes to wildlife, a precautionary approach is warranted because once a species is lost there is no coming back, and the negative repercussion of that on an ecosystem, as well as livelihoods of people is significant. HB 2841 is one such precautionary and preventative measure to ensure that wildlife can survive and thrive in Oregon for present and future generations of Oregonians.

Thank you for your time, and for considering this bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sristi Kamal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sristi Kamal
Senior Representative
Defenders of Wildlife
4110 SE Hawthorne Blvd. PMB 922,
Portland, Oregon
skamal@defenders.org