

My name is Greg Costello. I am testifying in favor of HB 2834, The Wildlife Corridor and Safe Road Crossing Act. I am the Executive Director of Wildlands Network, a nonprofit conservation organization that has focused on conservation science based identification, protection and restoration of wildlife corridors and ecosystems across North America since 1993. I have a degree in biology from the University of Virginia, a Juris Doctor from University of Colorado School of Law. I've practiced conservation and environmental law since 1986, including teaching environmental law classes at the University of Oregon School of Law from 2002 until 2010.

I first became involved with state efforts to protect wildlife corridors in 2008 with the Western Governors Association's wildlife corridors initiative. I was involved as a citizens representative in proceedings that followed the adoption of that initiative, including the Critical Habitat Assessment Tool ("CHAT") development, a process in which all western states, including Oregon, participated.

Wildlife corridors, including wildlife crossings over or around barriers like highways, are essential to the continued survival of Oregon's biodiversity, including but not limited to big game, and sport/commercial fish species. Protecting wildlife corridors is the single most recommended measure to protect biodiversity in light of climate change (climate change adaptation) by conservation scientists around the world.

State efforts to identify and protect wildlife corridors and to provide safe passage for wildlife have been hindered, despite enthusiasm by state wildlife and transportation agencies, by a lack of a legislative mandate and the same lack of adequate funding for our fish and wildlife agencies that plagues these agencies' efforts in general. To advance the single most important climate adaptation measure to protect wildlife, the Legislative and Executive branches of state governments must codify state's commitment to this effort. And states across the country are doing just that.

In the past two years, wildlife corridor legislation has been adopted or introduced into state houses in New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Mississippi, New Mexico, Wyoming, California and now, Oregon. Legislation or budget provisos to investigate wildlife corridor protections are also being considered in Washington, Colorado and perhaps other states of which I am unaware.

The state of Oregon has the opportunity to be a leader on the West coast with the passage of HB 2834. It is a more comprehensive bill than what has been adopted to date in California. It would provide a guide to legislators in Washington.

As wildlife does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries, having legal protections for wildlife movement throughout species' range is critical. Therefore, protecting wildlife movement in Oregon is essential for species moving north from California and Nevada or moving north from Oregon into Washington. Oregon, California and

Washington have the opportunity to lead the way on regional connectivity and to be a shining example to the rest of the states in our Union.

Protection of wildlife corridors is more critical than ever. The overwhelming majority of climate change models predict that many areas of the U.S. that are densely populated by humans will either be inundated by rising seas or uninhabitable do to temperature.

The Pacific Northwest is likely to be a climate refugia for our citizens. This increasing population will put even more pressure on wildlife habitat. If we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy the wildlife heritage that we, adult citizens of Oregon or Washington have experienced in our lifetimes, then we must act now to ensure that we provide habitat and room to roam for all of the incredible species of life that reside here.

I encourage, in the strongest of terms, that you vote for our future, and vote yes on HB 2834.

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