



ODFW Budget Testimony (HB 5510)
Joint Ways and Means Natural Resources Subcommittee
March 13, 2019

Dear Chairs Taylor and Reardon, members of the committee,

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association ("OCA") and Oregon Farm Bureau ("OFB") thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ODFW budget. OCA is the voice of the cattle industry in Oregon. We represent nearly 2,000 ranchers across Oregon and aim to help grow Oregon's beef industry and promote environmentally and socially sound economic practices in producing beef products sold worldwide. Oregon has over 13,000 cattle producers, using 57% of state agricultural lands and comprising 14% of Oregon's total agricultural sector. OFB is Oregon's largest grassroots agriculture association, representing 7,000 farming and ranching families across the state. Our mission is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for our members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry as a whole. Both our organizations work closely with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) on a variety of issues.

Livestock producers and farmers are uniquely dependent on the effectiveness and efficiency of ODFW as our producers provide land, feed and water for Oregon's diverse wildlife population. Our cooperation, collaboration and commitment to conservation is often overlooked by the public, but the staff of ODFW is keenly aware of ranchers work on the ground. With this relationship in mind, we first recognize ODFW staff, its great work and our continued relationship. Secondly, we want to highlight several areas of interest and concern for our industry as examples of our work and collaboration and dependence on ODFW.

OCA, OFB and our members have been vital players in Oregon's unique and highly successful efforts to conserve sage grouse habitat and populations and promote rangeland health and economic development vital to the future of rural eastern Oregon economies. On that note, **we request additional funding from the Governor's Recommended Budget for coordination of the Burns/Lakeview Local Implementation Teams (LIT) in the amount of \$200,000.** Funding these "LIT's" will facilitate continued local coordination for sage grouse habitat and continue to combat the potential need for a federal uplisting of sage grouse.

We also highlight our role in sustaining Oregon's wildlife populations, even when its costly and challenging for our members. Whether it is losing alfalfa to mule deer, hay to elk, or calves and sheep to wolf and cougars, livestock producers interact with wildlife and face challenges and losses every day throughout our state. As we requested to this committee in regards to the Oregon Department of Agriculture budget we respectfully ask that the committee **restore \$467,170 to Wildlife Services predator control in the ODFW budget.**

In addition, we encourage the committee to recognize the success of Oregon's Wolf Conservation and Management plan, largely due to the commitment and sacrifice of livestock

producers. **We ask to fund POP 117, Wolf Plan Implementation, in the amount of \$702,842.** This and any resources focused on collaring wolves in each of Oregon's identified packs will allow real-time data to be shared with ranchers, which would minimize wolf-livestock conflict, reduce uncertainty for producers, and foster co-existence and overall buy-in to Oregon's wolf conservation goals.

Finally, we have spoken directly with many of you and your colleagues over the growing challenges with Oregon's exploding elk population. Ranchers are having particular challenges with mule deer and elk, and lack of flexibility and consistency in using the damage program and other tools available to ODFW. We urge the committee and the department to redirect staff, where necessary, and urge local biologists to closely look at the best approaches to allow for management of elk and deer, particularly in Eastern Oregon.

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