

Watts Remy

From: Greg Costello <greg@wildlandsnetwork.org>
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2019 7:44 PM
To: SENR Exhibits
Cc: Greg Costello; Jessica Walz Schafer
Subject: Testimony in support of HB 2834: Wildlife Corridor Action Plan.

My name is Greg Costello. I am the Executive Director of Wildlands Network, a science based conservation organization that has advocated for the protection and restoration of native species and habitat in North America since 1991. For the past 28 years we have advocated for the reconnection of species' habitat with via wildlife corridors. I offer this testimony today in support of HB 2834: Wildlife Corridor Action Plan.

Today we face a sixth great extinction crisis. Studies consistently show an alarming decline in every taxon. Climate change will have significant global impacts over the course of the next decade with rising sea levels, changing weather patterns and resultant loss of biodiversity due to species' inability to adapt to the fast changing and extreme environment conditions. While the full impacts of climate change are yet to be determined, one thing is indisputable: climate change has arrived. No longer a black cloud in the distance, it is here right now. As we work to prevent or slow climate change, we now have no choice but to also prioritize climate adaptation.

Climate change challenges conservation strategies that focus on protecting defined, static areas. (Lemieux and Scott, 2005; Scott et al. 2002). Species are moving poleward and upward in elevation. (Parmesan and Yohe, 2003; Root et. al., 2003). Many species will lose representation in currently protected areas (Aruajo et. al, 2004), and in situ genetic adaptation of most species is not expected to occur fast enough to respond (Jump and Penuelas, 2005).

Heller and Zaveleta (2009) confirm that the most effective climate adaptation response: increase landscape connectivity with corridors, remove barriers for dispersal and migration (like roads), locate core reserves close to and connected to one another, and restore degraded habitats.

Wildlife do not recognize property boundaries. Federal agencies, specifically the U.S. Forest Service is now obligated by regulation to analyze and consider protection of wildlife corridors both on federal forest lands and on the adjacent lands on forest borders. Whether state, tribal or private, it is equally important for these landowner/managers to be engaged in planning for connectivity.

HB 2834 is a good start for Oregon, its agencies and it's residents to protecting wildlife, wildlife habitat and providing for connectivity as a climate adaptation response. The first step to protecting wildlife movement through wildlife corridors is to understand where they exist, and where they will exist in the future. The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife has already taken steps along this path, and HB 2834 will further support those efforts. Similarly the Oregon Department of Transportation will be an important agency in providing for wildlife movement through safe passage across Oregon roads. Once again, knowing where to locate wildlife crossings is the first necessary step in the process. HB 2834 is an important statement of support by the Oregon legislative branch to the Executive and its agencies.

Thank you,

Greg Costello