

Testimony on SB 642

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rodger Huffman, I live in NE Oregon. I spent 31 years with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, in charge of the predator programs for most of that time, as well as other programs.

Myself and Dr. Hansen spent a lot of time working with all interested parties to create the Administrative Rules currently in place. While following the intent of the law that created the original funds and outline of the process, we tried to make sure there were checks and balances between the state and counties. We wanted to be accountable for the grant monies as well as create processes that weren't overly burdensome to the counties and producers who were effected.

There was also a limited time law where producers with confirmed and probable losses could claim a tax credit, versus apply for compensation from the ODA .

It's interesting to note that the original compensation for losses was funded and administered by The Defenders of Wildlife. It wasn't in place too long but was helpful in most cases.

I have been active in wildlife caused loss/conflict for over 40 years. There are always ways to deal with/manage this issue, most times it comes down to, how can it be managed in a non lethal way, or, what are the potential lethal remedies. Whether it be mice, beavers, raccoons, bears or wolves, it always comes to those 2 things. Generally, if tolerance and acceptance of losses are the priority, then there has to be strong incentives. If the problem is remedied longer term there has to be many tools in the toolbox. When it comes to wolves, the toolbox is quite small.

What's always been hard to understand is that the organizations that promote conservation and exclusive non lethal tools and remedies, don't whole heartedly work toward building tolerance through programs and compensation for loss, like what is being proposed with SB 642. While the amount is still far under what is needed, it would show a good faith effort to recognize the losses, both confirmed and those losses validated at the local levels for unaccounted for animals in known wolf areas. There are many studies that were conducted after the wolves were reintroduced in 1995 sanctioned by USFWS that found in remote rugged country like we have in Oregon, for every calf found and confirmed killed by wolves, up to 8 more were never found or confirmed. Losses over and above normal are a real financial strain for livestock production.

The need is great and the time is now to build in more trust and tolerance by at least acknowledging losses do and will happen and that the state is willing to work toward this goal. The lack of this happening currently is low participation by producers to report and work with the programs. I don't believe the intent of the original deterrent and compensation laws intended for so little money to be put toward the program, SB 642 is a good starting point toward this recognized need. It is good for conservation and good for building more trust and participation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important bill. The Oregon Cattlemen support moving the bill forward.