



Testimony on House Bill 3167 (Predator Damage Control Districts)
House Committee on Revenue

April 27, 2021

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Pham and Reschke, and Members of the Committee:

The undersigned organizations **oppose House Bill 3167A** because it would permanently continue a program that funds lethal measures to address wildlife conflicts without doing enough to promote non-lethal measures.

HB 3167A would eliminate the sunset (currently January 2, 2022) on “predator damage control” districts. The districts, authorized in 2015 by HB 3188, are governmental entities that raise money “for the purpose of funding county services to prevent, reduce and mitigate damage to property from predatory animals.” Section 2(1)(a), chapter 650, Oregon Laws 2015. “Predatory animals,” in this case, include bears, bobcats, red foxes, cougars, “fur-bearing mammals,” gray wolves, coyotes, rabbits and “rodents.” Section 1(6), chapter 650, Oregon Laws 2015; ORS 497.655; ORS 610.002.

In practice, “predator damage control” districts raise money to help pay for county contracts with the Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (“Wildlife Services”). Although Wildlife Services promotes its efforts to use non-lethal methods and has guidelines providing for that, we know of no specific directive that requires the program to in fact consider and use non-lethal methods for addressing wildlife conflicts before resorting to lethal methods. Our information from people familiar with the program is that, in practice, Wildlife Services emphasizes lethal measures and often fails to adequately consider non-lethal measures.

Because predator damage control districts use government authority to raise money to address wildlife conflicts, continuation of the program should specifically authorize use of the money for non-lethal measures. There should also be specific statutory direction to resolve such conflicts with non-lethal methods if possible, because doing so would protect the public interest in preserving the state’s wildlife.

In addition, we question whether two districts and a six-year track record provide a sufficient basis for extending the program in perpetuity, especially when there has been so little reporting on how the money has been used (lethal v. non-lethal, species and number of animals killed, etc.) and the extent to which it can be reliably correlated to reduced wildlife damage.

If HB 3167 nevertheless move forward, **we suggest amendments** to: (a) include another sunset in six years; (b) make clear that money raised by the districts may be spent on non-lethal measures; (c) require that non-lethal methods be considered and used before resorting to lethal methods; and (d) require that counties receiving funds from the districts keep, or require their

contractors to keep, specific records on use of lethal and non-lethal measures and the number and species of animals killed, and to make those records publicly available.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Brian Posewitz

Director

Humane Voters Oregon

brian@humanevotersoregon.org; (503) 946-1534.

Samantha Bruegger

Wildlife Coexistence Campaigner

WildEarth Guardians

Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.

Senior NW Representative

Defenders of Wildlife

Brooks Fahy

Executive Director

Predator Defense

Bob Sallinger

Conservation Director

Audubon Society of Portland