

Reasons to support HB 2548 to research funding for wildlife crossings.

Suzanne Linford, founder of Protect Animal Migration (PAM), an educational nonprofit since 2016 (www.protectanimalmigration.org; FB protectanimalmigration – central Oregon.) working in collaboration with ODOT, ODFW, the Deschutes National Forest to provide fact-based information to the general public on the need for crossings. PAM is under the umbrella of the Oregon Wildlife Foundation.

Reasons:

1. Crossings pay for themselves over time by reducing the costs of animal/vehicle collisions.
2. In central Oregon (Deschutes County) on Highway 97 and county feeder roads, over 5,000 animal vehicle collisions occur annually (1,000 are reported but both ODOT and ODFW agree that it is five times that number) at a cost of \$6500 per collision for deer and \$8500 per collision for elk. This amounts to \$32 million per year. Two crossings near Sunriver, have reduced collisions by 85%. They are used by 40 species of animals.
3. While other western states: Washington, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming and Arizona have dozens on crossings and are building more; Oregon has four crossings.
4. Mule deer are migratory and have to move between summer (Cascades) and winter (Fort Rock and east of Bend) to find forage, genetic diversity and cover. When they cannot migrate, they become stranded in neighborhoods. They do not thrive and will sicken and die or be killed by cougars, bob cats, dogs and other predators.
5. There are federal funds to help build these crossings. NGO's like the Oregon Wildlife Foundation, the Oregon Hunters Association, PEW charitable trusts, other sportsmen's groups and some small public agency grants have raised over eight hundred thousand dollars to help complete the most recent crossing at Gilchrist. But these sources are not sustainable.
6. A recent PEW poll of Oregonians representing urban/rural, college educated, and high school educated found that over 80% supported crossings and over 70 % said they would help pay for them.