



February 1, 2022

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust, we respectfully urge your support for HB 4130 which would invest in wildlife road crossing infrastructure, making our roads safer for people and wildlife.

Oregon has the highest likelihood of wildlife crashes among west coast states. In 2019, the state Department of Transportation recorded 6,100 wildlife-vehicle collisions, with twice that many more collisions likely going unreported. This is a growing problem throughout Oregon and one that we must address. Just recently, two hikers in the Bend area stumbled upon a pile of dead animals, including a pregnant doe, a fox, a cat, and a dog.¹ Oregon State Police believe the animals likely died as a result of vehicle collisions. The dead animals went unreported by the individual who stashed the carcasses in a popular hiking area, potentially leading to greater conflicts between recreators and scavengers such as bobcats, mountain lions, bears, and other native wildlife.

With only 5 wildlife crossings, Oregon significantly trails other western states – Colorado has 69, Utah and California each have 50, and Nevada has 23 for large mammals alone. However, many opportunities exist in Oregon for wildlife crossings, informed by state agency data on hot spots.

According to U.S. Department of Transportation's most recently published Highway Statistics, Oregon has over 79,000 miles of roads crisscrossing the state and Oregonians travel nearly 36 billion miles on those roads every year. Washington, our neighboring state, estimated that on a 12.5 mile stretch of highway in the state, wildlife collisions cost \$2.5 million (or \$6,500 per collision) annually due to costs attributed to injury, vehicle repairs, etc. The other impact, though more challenging to economically quantify, is the loss of individual animals and the ripple effects these losses cause on wildlife populations and their ecosystems.

Between 2007-2017 Oregon Department of Transportation documented 12,540 animal vehicle collisions, a significant number of which was deer and elk. There is a direct relationship between the health of the population of a species and its ability to move, access adequate food sources, migrate to winter ranges, find mates, and keep their genetic pool healthy.

As socio-economic and demographic pressures grow in Oregon, the state must balance development with conserving the natural resources. This includes ensuring there is sufficient connectivity of habitats by way of wildlife corridors and safe crossing areas.

Habitat loss and fragmentation, largely due to human development, pose an immediate and long-term threat to the persistence of countless wildlife species. Wildlife species must move around to find food, water, shelter, adapt to changing environments and the effects of climate change, and reach breeding

¹ Williams, J. 2022. 'I was sobbing': Bend hikers find dead cat, doe, dog and fox in Badlands Wilderness
<https://ktvz.com/news/deschutes-county/2022/01/25/bend-hiker-finds-dead-doe-dog-and-fox-in-badlands-wilderness-area/>

or overwintering areas. Furthermore, diminished habitats can reduce food availability and increase conflicts with humans, pets, and livestock.

Habitat connectivity is also increasingly necessary for wildlife as ecosystems face the effects of climate change. As the climate changes, habitat loss and fragmentation may prevent wildlife from finding suitable habitats. Climate change will only increase the challenges many wildlife species face in a world quickly succumbing to human alteration. Restoring and conserving critical habitat and wildlife corridors as well as developing safe wildlife road crossings is critical to ensure wildlife are protected from increase human development and climate change.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to submit written comments in support of HB 4130.

Sincerely,

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