

February 2, 2022

To: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Oregon Capital  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon

Subject: Testimony in support of HB 4130-1 that provides funding for wildlife crossing projects

Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Brock-Smith, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Tim Greseth, Executive Director of the Oregon Wildlife Foundation; an operating charitable foundation dedicated to the lasting conservation of Oregon's fish, wildlife, and natural places.

The Foundation is one of many organizations rallying to support the passage of HB 4130-1 which would allocate up to \$7 million in General Fund dollars to support the implementation of wildlife crossing projects across Oregon.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions are a big problem in Oregon with over 6,000 documented collisions on Oregon Department of Transportation-managed highways and roads each year and as many or more on county, city, and private roadways. Even these figures under-represent the true scope of the problem as at least an equal number of collisions, for a variety of reasons, go unreported each year in our state.

The economic, ecological, and personal damage is profound. In monetary terms, wildlife-vehicle collisions in Oregon cause tens of millions of dollars in property losses every year. On the ecological front, all wildlife must move to find food, mates, and safety. Some of that movement is migration that put wildlife and Oregon drivers in harm's way. For example, mule deer and elk migrate between the high desert and the Cascades in the Fall and Spring of each year. Their pathway places them on busy roads and highways in central Oregon resulting in more than 1,000 documented vehicle strikes annually. Already a species in decline, more mule deer are killed on Oregon roads than from legal hunting. Finally, and not least, people also lose their lives. On average, the death of two motorists each year are attributable to an interaction with wildlife.

That's why coalitions are springing up across Oregon to help address this problem. It is bringing groups together that don't always agree on policy issues but are of the same mind on this: wildlife passage projects work and can dramatically reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions where they are built. Dedicated wildlife under and over passes are the most eye-catching solutions but retrofits of existing bridges and culverts can also make a big difference for Oregon's wildlife and drivers.

This isn't just about large animals or a particular region of our state. People and wildlife are at risk wherever there are roads and traffic, and as Oregon's human population grows, so will our roadway conflicts.

The Oregon Action Team, using ODOT's wildlife-vehicle collision data and in collaboration with a host of on-the-ground partners, has identified 10 project locations across Oregon where wildlife passage is needed and, with funding, is implementable. These projects run the gamut from early stage to almost completed. The funding needed to complete or make these projects shovel-ready is between \$22 and \$36 million dollars.

That's where HB 4130-1 comes in. The recently passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes a \$350 million dollar wildlife passage program that is expected to include a non-Federal match requirement. Passage of HB 4130-1 will ensure that Oregon is competitive for these badly needed funds. This is an unprecedented opportunity to help conserve Oregon's wildlife and increase roadway safety for the traveling public

The Oregon Wildlife Foundation urges your support of HB 4130-1.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Greseth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Greseth  
Executive Director  
Oregon Wildlife Foundation