



PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

Private Forests. Public Treasures.

February 3, 2022

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: Letter of Support for HB 4130-1 Funding Wildlife Connectivity

Submitted via OLIS Testimony Submission Portal

Dear Members of the Committee,

Pacific Forest Trust strongly supports HB 4130-1. Our two conservation projects in the Cascade-Siskiyou region near I-5 and Mount Ashland will provide enhanced habitat, and wildlife crossings are an essential means for animals to access these properties. This bill would provide crucial funding to advance severely-needed wildlife connectivity projects in this area and across the state. As a proud member of the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition, we encourage the legislature to pass this legislation.

The comparatively low number of wildlife crossings in Oregon has contributed to the state having the highest rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions on the west coast. About 6,000 such crashes are reported annually, and the unreported number is estimated to be much higher. At an average cost of \$9,000 for a deer collision and \$24,000 for elk, this creates a significant financial burden. Even more importantly, it is a risk to human safety and puts unsustainable pressure on animal populations. Without action, we can only expect the problem to worsen in a future driven by climate change, as animals travel longer distances seeking refuge areas that meet their habitat requirements.

The need for solutions is clearly demonstrated in the area where I-5 divides the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. This is a particularly important wildlife migration corridor and has been identified by the Department of Transportation as collision red-zone. Pacific Forest Trust's two conservation projects in this region, the Mountcrest Working Forest and the Mount Ashland Forest Climate Resilience Project, will provide resilient habitat and enhanced connectivity to other protected areas. But to reach these refuges, many animals will have to make the dangerous trek across the interstate.

Fortunately, wildlife crossings have proven to be an extremely effective solution. They are truly a win-win-win: they increase road safety, protect and enhance biodiversity, and save the state money in the long term. Crossings have been shown to reduce crashes by up to 97%, with similar results having already been demonstrated in Oregon.

This bill is a critical step in advancing connectivity projects in the Cascade-Siskiyou region and across the state of Oregon. The \$7 million allocation would support feasibility studies and provide matching funds that will be necessary to secure federal support. We urge the legislature to improve road safety for humans and wildlife by passing HB 4130.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Laurie A. Wayburn" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Laurie A. Wayburn
President & Co-Founder