



To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, and Water

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 2/6/2022

RE: OPPOSITION to HB 4127 to increase funding to the Wolf Compensation Fund for the purposes of reimbursing producers for missing livestock without proof of wolf depredation.

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and McLain, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 4127. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network's strong opposition to passing HB 4127 to add another \$1 million dollars to the Wolf Compensation Fund for the purposes of reimbursing ranchers/livestock producers for missing livestock without proof of wolf depredation.

Our coalition is so concerned about this bill that we have unanimously voted in support of designating it a **Major Threat to A Healthy Oregon**, one of only two bills to have this designation in the 2022 legislative session.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 38 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

OCN and OLCV oppose HB 4127 and we support our member organizations and the Wildlife Coalition's request to reform the Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund ("Wolf Compensation Fund"). This program was originally established in 2011 to support landowners and build tolerance for the wolves when they were protected under federal and state Endangered Species Act. The program provides compensation for direct loss (confirmed and probable depredation by wolves), non-lethal tools, and missing livestock, in the listed order of priority. The program receives \$100,000 every biennium from the state and the funds used for non-lethals is matched by federal dollars. In the last full session in 2021 the program received an additional \$400,000 of funding that it has not even begun to spend down.

We oppose HB 4127 for the following reasons:

1. **The program's "missing livestock" component is controversial and unverifiable:** Missing livestock, by definition, cannot reliably be attributed to wolf depredation. Livestock can go missing for many reasons including theft, other predators and illness. There are no sideboards on payments for "missing" livestock — no proof of cattle put out versus brought in and no presence of wolves or known depredation in the area. Payment requests are for the full amount of the livestock. These questionable payments have been investigated by [OPB](#) and [High Country News](#). Back-filling the program for this biennium means paying money for claims of missing livestock. In 2021, confirmed and probable wolf

depredation and injuries accounted for 50 cattle. In comparison, **679 missing livestock** claims have been made for the same period.

2. **The program already received additional \$400,000 for 2021-2023 biennium:** The money has only started to roll out of ODA. We cannot determine the sufficiency and the usage of this additional sum of money till the end of the biennium.

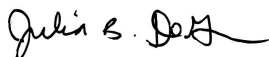
3. **The program is in need of reform:** The Fund was established in 2011 and, to this date, it has not been revisited or revised. The structure and coverage of the program made sense when we had wolves in 2-3 counties, and so county level structure and payments worked; we now have wolves in 12 counties and the application process, and compensation process is making less sense now. Wolves were also protected under both federal and state Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2011; they now have no protections at all. Poaching is rampant (**9 wolves poached** within the last year). Additionally, the state kills wolves in response to depredations under the current Wolf Management Plan. So we question: what is the purpose of compensation if landowners get paid and wolves are also being killed by ODFW at the same time? **This is not promoting co-existence or building tolerance.** Many livestock producers agree that the program is in dire need of reform. Their voices need to be heard as well. Throwing additional money at a problem without updating the flawed program will not make the problem go away.

We hope this bill is an opportunity to open up the program and take a closer look at how it aligns (or does not align) with protecting wolves, and promoting coexistence. It is our understanding that without updating the program to address existing issues outlined in this letter, and that throwing more money at it in its current form will only increase the perception that wolves are killing livestock and potentially increase the push to kill more wolves in Oregon—the opposite of what the program was intended to accomplish.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions or comments: Julia DeGraw (julia@olcv.org) our our ONC partners: Sristi Kama (skamal@defenders.org) or Danielle Moser (dmoser@oregonwild.org); Bethany Cotton (bethany@cascwild.org)

We urge you to vote no on HB 4127 and to not move it out of the House Agriculture, Land Use, and Water Resources Committee.

Sincerely,



Julia B. DeGraw
 Coalition Director
 Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:



1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Pew Charitable Trusts, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, Wild Salmon Center