



House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon

Date: 02.07.2022

Sub: Testimony in opposition to HB 4127 (wolf compensation fund)

Chair Helm, Vice Chair Owens, Vice Chair McLain and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use and Water Resources:

This testimony is on behalf of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC). OWC consists of the following nine wildlife conservation groups: Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Portland Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Oregon Wild, Western Environmental Law Center and WildEarth Guardians. Together we represent over a 100,000 Oregonians who care about state's wildlife and wild spaces.

OWC opposes HB 4127 and instead asks for reform of the Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund ("Wolf Compensation Fund"). HB 4127 would allocate \$1 million of general fund dollars for the remainder of this biennium to the Wolf Compensation Fund. The program was 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 nonlethal measures is matched by federal dollars.

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](#). Backfilling 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 an additional \$400,000 for 2021-2023 biennium:** This money has only started to roll out of ODA. We cannot determine the sufficiency and use of this additional money until the end of the biennium.
3. **The program needs 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 county-level structure and payments worked. We now have wolves in 12 counties, and the application and compensation processes make 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), and we kill wolves in response to depredations. So we ask: what is the purpose of compensation if landowners get paid and wolves are 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 money at a problem will not make it go away.

We hope this bill is an opportunity to take a closer look at the program and how it aligns (or does not align) with protecting wolves and promoting coexistence.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration.

Contacts: Sristi Kamal (skamal@defenders.org); Danielle Moser (dmoser@oregonwild.org); Bethany Cotton (bethany@cascwild.org).

For the Oregon Wildlife Coalition:

