

Submitter: Judith Lienhard

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

Measure: HB4080

HB 4080 would authorize special districts that collect money from landowners “for the purpose

of funding county services to prevent, reduce and mitigate damage to property from predatory

animals.” (Section 2(1)(a).) Targeted animals could include “bears, gray wolves, red foxes, gray

foxes, coyotes, cougars, bobcats, beavers, fishers, martens, minks, muskrats, otters, raccoons,

feral swine * * * rabbits, rodents and birds that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops,

products and activities.” (Section 1(6)(a).) A similar program was created in 2015 but sunset at

the beginning of this year. A 2021 bill to remove the sunset (HB 3167) did not pass.

Reasons to Oppose HB 4080

The Money Would Go to a Federal Program Known for Cruel and Unnecessary Killing. In

practice, money raised by the districts would go, as it has in the past, to “Wildlife Services” – a

highly controversial program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that carries out “predator

control” on public and private lands with poisoning, trapping, snaring, aerial gunning, and paid

hunters. (See Exposed – USDA’s Secret War on Wildlife (short documentary film);

The Rogue

Agency, Harper’s Magazine (2016).) In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, Wildlife Services

killed 201,606 animals in Oregon, including 210 bears, 2,147 coyotes and 92 mountain lions,

using methods including neck and leg snares, cages and foothold traps, aerial gunning and paid

hunters. (Wildlife Services Data Reports 2019-2020, pp. 210-26.) Science increasingly shows all

that killing doesn’t reduce conflict and may increase it. (E.g., Killing Coyotes Is Not As Effective

As Once Thought, Researchers Say, National Public Radio (2019); Scientific Opinion Letter,

Yellowstone Ecological Research Center (2012).)

There Would Be No Requirement to Consider Nonlethal Alternatives. HB 4080

includes

language that would permit use of district funds for nonlethal measures. However, it would not require recipients of district funds to use or even consider such measures.² Given its reputation

1 The Oregon Wildlife Coalition consists of Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, the Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Oregon Wild, Portland Audubon, Western Environmental Law Center and WildEarth Guardians.

2 Nonlethal measures include fencing, protective housing, electronic scare devices and guard

dogs. For more information on nonlethal techniques, see this website for a Benton County

program that emphasizes the use of these tools.

for killing wildlife as its preferred solution to human-wildlife conflict (see references above),

Wildlife Services cannot simply be trusted to do the right thing.

The Districts Would be Unaccountable to the Public. HB 4080 includes a provision specifically

designed to prevent the public from holding the special districts accountable. (Section 8.) Thus,

even if HB 4080 had something in it to protect the public interest in wildlife (which it doesn't),

the bill would prevent enforcement of that.

Oregon Needs a Broader Conversation on the Role of Government in "Predator Control." In

addition to receiving money from "predator damage control districts," "Wildlife Services"

receives money from general fund appropriations to the Department of Agriculture and the

Department of Fish and Wildlife. Before resurrecting "predator control districts," Oregon should

take a hard look – through a stakeholder workgroup or otherwise – at how this money is spent,

whether it results in excessive and unnecessary killing of wildlife, and whether public funding

should be discontinued or at least have additional sideboards.