



February 9, 2023

Representative Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon Legislature

Re: Environment Oregon supports House Bill 2999

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Environment Oregon is a statewide, member-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water and open space, representing tens of thousands of members across Oregon. We support House Bill 2999.

We need more nature. More nature means abundant wildlife in our world – from butterflies floating by, to coyotes howling at night, to whale tails breaching the surface just visible from shore. Nature works better when it's connected.

But in Oregon and in the U.S., our wild spaces have been fragmented by roads, fences and other products of human development that block the movement of animals. This can push whole ecosystems out of balance, cut off genetic flow between populations, leave animals short of key resources, interrupt migration cycles and leave species more susceptible to other challenges like disease, wildfires and climate change.

A key solution to habitat fragmentation is to create wildlife corridors, projects that reconnect separated habitats, keeping in mind a species' need for adequate space, food, water, shelter and mates. Corridors can be made up of single projects or networks of small-scale infrastructure, including but not limited to wildlife crossings. Wildlife crossings are typically overpasses or underpasses that allow wildlife to safely cross major roads that run through their habitats. Oregon currently only has five completed wildlife crossings, much fewer than other Western states, but because of investments made by the Oregon Legislature last year, that number will soon grow.

We urge the passage of House Bill 2999 to further strengthen Oregon's wildlife-vehicle collision program and invest in more of these critical projects across the state. These projects will increase the safety of our roads, provide more freedom of movement for our wildlife and help to create more complete ecosystems that have been fragmented by human development. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,
Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director