

Safe Passage for People and Wildlife – Support House Bill 2999 (2023)

Collisions on our roadways and related wildlife migration barriers have serious consequences for people and wildlife. House Bill 2999 strengthens Oregon’s wildlife-vehicle collision program and invests \$5 million in critical wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity projects across the state.

Public Safety

Oregon has the highest risk of wildlife crashes among west coast states.¹ In 2022, ODOT recorded 4,874 wildlife-vehicle collisions involving large mammals, and multiple studies show that [nearly three times](#) more collisions likely go unreported. These collisions cause [hundreds of injuries to drivers and a number of fatalities](#) each year.

Ecological Impacts

Wildlife crossings and connectivity are vital for animals to access food, habitat, and more. Unfortunately, [more than a million animals](#) are killed by motorists nationally each year – over two per minute. In Oregon, vehicle collisions kill threatened [Pacific marten](#), and mule deer (the most commonly hit animal in the state) have seen population declines of [up to 54%](#) in recent years.



Credit: Oregon Hunters Association

Broad Support

There is broad bipartisan support for wildlife crossings from voters in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the state. A 2020 poll found that [86% of Oregon voters favor constructing more wildlife crossings](#).

Timely Opportunities

While Oregon trails other western states with only 5 completed wildlife crossings – CO has [65](#), [UT](#) and [CA](#) each have 50, and NV has 23 for large mammals alone² – investments by the 2022 Legislature have brought crossing projects on Hwy 97, I-5 near Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, and Hwy 20 on the Burns Paiute Tribe’s land in Malheur County closer to completion. Continued investments, informed by data on priority connectivity areas and collision hot spots, can advance critical projects, such as on Hwy 20 in Deschutes County, I-84 near Meacham, Hwy 140 outside Klamath Falls, Hwy 26 near Dayville, and others across the state.



Credit: John McFarland III

Proven Effectiveness

Wildlife underpasses or overpasses are proven to significantly reduce collisions. In its first year, the Lava Butte wildlife underpass on Hwy 97 in Central Oregon was used by 29 different species and deer-vehicle collisions [were reduced by over 90%](#). A new underpass at Gilchrist is producing similar results.

Leveraging Federal Funds

Congress recently allocated \$350 million to competitive grants through a [Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program](#). Oregon can compete for dedicated federal resources by prioritizing relevant projects and allocating state matching funds.

Financial Savings

Wildlife crossings are a wise investment, [yielding annual benefits of \\$250,000 to \\$443,000 per structure](#). Research from September 2022 finds that vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting value impose an [average cost of \\$16,967 for a deer collision and \\$56,782 for an elk collision](#). The cumulative cost for those two species alone on Oregon’s roads totaled \$91.7 million in 2022.³ The public resource value of an animal to the state can, on its own, be as high as \$50,000 per animal for some species.⁴

Contact: Rep.KenHelm@OregonLegislature.gov

Please Join the Coalition in Support of HB 2999

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, Oregon
Center for Biological Diversity
Central Oregon LandWatch
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
Environmental Oregon
Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust
Humane Voters Oregon
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Oregon Hunters Association
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Wildlife Foundation
Oregon Wild
Protect Animal Migration
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossings Coalition
Southern Oregon Land Conservancy
The Conservation Angler
The Humane Society of the U.S.
The Humane Society of the U.S., Wildlife Land Trust
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Western Environmental Law Center
Wildlands Network

¹ State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Company, “How Likely Are You to Have an Animal Collision?” StateFarm.com, accessed February 9, 2023.

² Communication with the Nevada Department of Transportation.

³ Cumulative costs in 2022 dollars calculated by using 2022 ODOT Wildlife Collision Data, provisions of O.R.S. 496.705 (2) and Huijser, M.P. et al, 2022.

⁴ O.R.S. 496.705 (2)(F), (G), (H).