



SIERRA CLUB

OREGON CHAPTER

February 10, 2023

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Testimony in Support of HB 2999

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2999 on behalf of the more than 74,000 members and supporters of the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club.

Invest in Nature. What's not to like about HB 2999, the bill to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity? The Oregon Sierra Club strongly backs passage of this bill to invest in wildlife-friendly infrastructure and motorist safety in identified wildlife corridors. Protecting and investing in Nature are integral to Oregon's values, identity, and its economic future.

Wildlife Welfare. Maintaining established wildlife corridors with strategically located crossings supports customary and adaptive migration patterns for feeding, watering, sheltering and breeding of multiple species. Wildlife adjustments to the effects of a changing climate necessitate special consideration of how best to support wildlife in that ongoing process, and our state has a responsibility to address preventable reductions in wildlife populations via vehicle collision.

Cost-Effective. How effective are wildlife crossings in reducing vehicle-wildlife collisions? A whopping 80-90% reduction in collisions! A recent study from Washington State University estimated that each wildlife crossing can result in \$235,000 – \$443,000 in annual savings, taking into consideration damages to people and their vehicles.

Cost-Benefit. With a mere five constructed wildlife passage structures, Oregon is an outlier compared to most western states; Washington has 30, Nevada 30, California 50. Colorado and Wyoming case studies inform us that crossing structures handily recover initial construction costs. Recent research conducted by the Pew Charitable Trust in September 2022 found that "vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting value bring the average cost of a deer collision to \$16,967 and an elk collision to \$56,7822. The cumulative cost of collisions with those two species alone on Oregon's roads totaled \$91.7 million in 2022."

The Imperative Moment to Act. Since the Department of Transportation has discretion to include wildlife crossings in designing future projects, and if data show that crossings substantially reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, why not codify them in HB 2999? This is the opportune moment to secure critical matching dollars this bill will provide to enable Oregon to apply for federal funding through grants in the 2021 Infrastructure bill's Wildlife Crossing Grant Program—as well as apply for dollars available in National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's America the Beautiful grant program.

Strong Citizen Support. According to a February 2020 Pew Charitable Trust poll, 86% of Oregon voters say the state should “adopt policies that protect wildlife migration routes, and 88% support ensuring that federal land managers maintain open corridors for wildlife to migrate on public lands.”

In conclusion, the Oregon Sierra Club supports HB 2999 that provides for the State Department of Fish and Wildlife to carry out projects to support wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity within identified priority corridors, and also provides \$5 million of General Fund moneys to the State Department of Fish and Wildlife to carry out the provisions cited here. We urge the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water to vote YES on HB 2999 to advance this legislation.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Dix
Chair, Legislative Committee
Oregon Chapter Sierra Club