

Submitter: Josephine Hawthorne

On Behalf  
Of: Myself

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural  
Resources

Measure: SB5509

I am Josephine Hawthorne. I am asking the Ways and Means Natural Resource Subcommittee to restore to the ODFW budget \$3 million to fund the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package. The governor's budget does not include funding for the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package; I am urging the subcommittee to restore the funding.

As humans and wildlife come into more and more frequent contact, it has become critical that ODFW have the resources to promote wildlife stewardship, humanely resolve conflicts and engage new audiences in wildlife conservation. This is particularly important in the Willamette Valley where the majority of Oregon's residents live. During 2022, a task force that included ODFW Staff and Commissioners, Oregon State Police, conservation groups, animal welfare groups and wildlife rehabilitators met and identified this as an urgent need to advance wildlife conservation in Oregon. In response, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife submitted to the Oregon Governor, as part of their proposed budget package, a nearly 3 million dollar Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package that would promote wildlife stewardship, reduce human-wildlife conflicts, engage new audiences, and support wildlife rehabilitation efforts.

The stakeholders in the management, protection, and rehabilitation of Oregon's wildlife worked together to devise a plan to address the pressures placed on wildlife by increasing development and other human activities. The Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package is a reasonable and responsible step in addressing these pressures. The Funding Package would: provide funds for five Wildlife Coexistence Biologists focused on outreach, education, and response around human interactions with wildlife; a Communications Coordinator focused on developing and implementing communications and engagement to promote stewardship and lessen conflicts between humans and wildlife; \$400,000 for a Living with Wildlife Campaign (modeled after ODFW's Anti-poaching Campaign); and a \$300,000 grant program to support wildlife rehabilitation centers.

As Oregon faces the existential threats caused by climate change, pressure on and conflicts between humans and wildlife will increase. The Wildlife Coexistence and Funding Package is a modest, yet crucial, step in drawing attention to these conflicts and solutions for addressing them. If Oregon does not start to deal with these issues now, it will soon find that it is too late to save the creatures and habitat that make living here a unique experience. Our children will lose so much if Oregon does not

start to look ahead and take the steps to preserve what we have. Once Oregon is gone, Oregonians cannot restore what has been lost.

Josephine Hawthorne