



Think Wild
62410 Erickson Rd.
Bend, OR 97701
www.thinkwildco.org
Tax ID: 46-2360867

March 21, 2023

Re: ODFW Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package

Dear Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

We are writing on behalf of Think Wild, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit wildlife hospital and conservation education center in Bend, Oregon. Think Wild is the only public wildlife rehabilitation hospital and conservation center in the area, serving the entire region of Central Oregon, which includes Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook and Lake Counties. The organization was founded in 2016 and has since emerged as a regional leader in wildlife conservation. It is Think Wild's mission is to inspire the high desert community to care for and protect native wildlife through education, conservation, and rescue and rehabilitation. Our activities strongly align with ODFW's mission to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

We are writing in support of the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package. We believe that this portion of the ODFW budget is crucial for supporting wildlife conservation in Oregon. Restoring this funding package would help ODFW promote wildlife stewardship, engage communities in conservation, advance humane solutions to wildlife conflicts, and expand resources to rescue and rehabilitate injured and orphaned native wildlife. Restoring the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package would improve outcomes for wildlife in the state of Oregon by supporting wildlife rehabilitation centers like Think Wild.

Oregon's wildlife rehabilitation centers are providing essential services to both humans and wildlife. Rehabilitation centers do much more than treat injured and orphaned native wildlife, although that is important. We are trusted resources that work to combat human wildlife conflicts, especially in urban areas, as demonstrated by our wildlife hotline.

Just last year Think Wild responded to over 2,200 calls and social media messages from the public relating to wildlife concerns, of which more than 50% were resolved through individualized education. These are all calls that we diverted from ODFW requests. We also work closely with our local ODFW biologists to respond to public concerns and devise best practice for responding to wildlife calls.

Our extensive and diverse partnerships further support the credibility, necessity, and importance of Oregon's rehabilitation centers. For example, We partner with Eagle Environmental and USFWS to tag and track released golden eagles to measure post rehabilitative success.

We also partner with the Central Oregon Community Veterinary Technician Program to provide wildlife veterinary externships, with five students rotating through the summer. We also offer a wildlife rehabilitation-focused lecture series to these students. We work with local watershed

councils to promote our beaver habitat restoration services and we partner with rural schools in Jefferson County and Warm Springs to promote coexistence strategies.

Despite all these essential services to the state, we do not receive government funding and instead struggle to support operations with private funding. The proposed grant program would allow us to spend less time finding alternative sources of funding and more time expanding our services and partnerships.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your dedication to wildlife conservation success in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Think Wild

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