



TO: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

FROM: Amaroq Weiss and Quinn Read, Center for Biological Diversity

DATE: March 22, 2023

RE: Testimony in Opposition to HB 2631

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

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and our nearly 32,000 Oregon members and supporters, we submit the following comments in opposition to HB 2631. The Center for Biological Diversity has been deeply involved in the development of policy pertaining to Oregon wolf recovery and conservation since wolves started arriving here in 1999. We strongly oppose HB 2631, which would reduce social tolerance for coexisting with wolves. This bill also fails to address any of the problems that have riddled the Wolf Compensation and Proactive Measures Trust Fund.

Oregon's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, adopted in 2005, recommended creating a state-funded Wolf Compensation and Proactive Measures Trust Fund, as a means to increase social tolerance for coexisting with wolves.

Compensation can in some cases be an important tool for addressing livestock-wolf conflicts in Oregon - if it aids in increasing social tolerance for coexisting with wolves. Social tolerance is evidenced by a willingness to proactively implement nonlethal strategies, tools, and livestock handling techniques to deter conflicts from arising.

This bill, HB 2631, adds a multiplier to whatever payments are made to livestock owners for confirmed or probable wolf kills. Proponents assert the multiplier is needed to compensate for missing livestock or working dogs whose cause for going missing can never be determined.

Such an action flouts the very reason the Plan advocated for a compensation fund – to build social tolerance for living with wolves. The multiplier has the exact opposite effect. It creates an incentive to be reckless and decline to use proactive conflict-prevention methods and techniques. Why bother to implement those methods if, when one of your livestock or working dogs becomes a confirmed or probable wolf kill, you'll receive payments of up to seven times their value?

We also cannot support the bill because of how the Fund has been implemented so far. The Fund envisioned by the Plan was one built on transparent guidelines, documentation, consistent application throughout the state and with enforcement of clear, consistent requirements. Since the Fund's creation, the public has had the opportunity to witness and evaluate its implementation.

The evidence is clear: the Fund's implementation is not consistent with transparency, abuse-prevention, state-wide consistent application – all necessary for good governance. The many flaws of the Fund were brought to the attention of the public in an [investigative journalism piece published by Oregon Public Broadcasting in 2017](#).

The problems it identified six years ago – lax documentation, payments for claims which defy biological evidence, and extreme inconsistency in how the Fund is operated county by county – have not been solved.

We recommend the Secretary of State's office perform an audit of the program to uncover and identify these areas of abuses.

Just as important, no surveys have been conducted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife or the Oregon Department of Agriculture to determine if the Fund's existence and application has — in fact — resulted in increased social tolerance for coexisting with wolves by livestock owners. Ideally, longitudinal surveys (surveys conducted every few years, over time) would have been conducted. We recommend a program of such surveys be launched.


HB 2631 would use valuable Fund monies in ways contrary to the Fund's intention. It accomplishes the opposite of increasing social tolerance for living with wolves. And it does nothing to fix the problems which were made public in 2017.

For the reasons provided here, we urge you to oppose this bill. What is needed instead are explicit plans and timelines for program reform and surveys to assess its effectiveness.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.



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