



Northwest Office

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March 23, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water
900 Court St NE
Salem, Oregon

RE: Neutral testimony for HB 2633 (Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund bill)

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

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders), I am submitting the following comments on our **neutral stance to HB 2633 amendment -3**, which proposes to compensate producers with confirmed or probable wolf depredations two hundred percent of the fair market value for breeding female cattle and sheep and for juvenile cattle and sheep that are less than one year old. While we would **prefer the wolf depredation compensation conversation be moved to a work group**, we recommend the Committee consider amendment -3 as a compromise position for livestock producers and the general public.

As a wildlife conservation organization that works with local communities to promote coexistence with wildlife (including wolves), Defenders recognizes the importance of compensation as important tool in the toolbox for landowners and livestock producers. In fact, in 1987 Defenders established a wolf-livestock conflict compensation fund in western states to support producers before states developed their own compensation programs. In 2011, Defenders was one of the stakeholder groups that developed the legislation which established a state level compensation program in Oregon. In 2020, we identified problems with the current Program and collaborated with eastern Oregon producers to propose solutions that would streamline the process, address the issues of transparency and accountability, and ensure the program was useful to producers (e.g., expedited direct loss payments). We developed a proposal that was shared with Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), the Governor's office and county level stakeholders. ODA hosted a multi-stakeholder meeting during summer of 2020 using the proposal as a starting point of a dialogue to reform the Program. Therefore, we have a history and motivation to support an efficient and functioning compensation program in the state.

Defenders recognizes the challenge Oregon state has in reforming the Program to meet the needs of livestock producers while addressing the concerns of the general public. As a proposed path forward, Defenders **urges the Committee to consider the compromise of amendment -3** because it removes the controversial missing livestock aspect of the program and recognizes the value heifers have to maintaining resilient livestock operations and that calves and sheep are most vulnerable to predation by wolves by offering producers two hundred percent of fair market value for those specific stock and age classes.

However, Defenders is further committed to participating and collaborating in any effort that would improve the Program and believes the multistakeholder discussions ODA facilitated in 2020 were ended prematurely. **If no agreement can be reached on amendment -3, then we strongly recommend the Committee move this discussion to a work group** where we will have more time to discuss this, especially as the Oregon Wolf Plan is coming up for revision later this year.



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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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