



Think Wild  
62410 Erickson Rd.  
Bend, OR 97701  
[www.thinkwildco.org](http://www.thinkwildco.org)  
Tax ID: 46-2360867

January 26, 2024

Re: ODFW Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package

Dear House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

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 HB 4148 Wildlife Funding Package. We believe that this portion of the ODFW budget is crucial for supporting wildlife conservation in Oregon. Approving this funding package would help ODFW promote wildlife stewardship, engage communities in conservation, advance humane solutions to wildlife conflicts, improve safe passage corridors and wildlife crossings, and improve ODFW's understanding of diseases affecting wildlife populations in the state.

Wildlife rehabilitation centers like Think Wild provide essential services to both humans and wildlife. Rehabilitation centers do much more than treat injured and orphaned native wildlife: we are trusted resources that work to educate the public on human-wildlife conflicts, wildlife coexistence, and conservation, especially in urban areas, as demonstrated by our wildlife hotline.

Just last year, Think Wild responded to over 2,500 calls and social media messages from the public relating to wildlife concerns and conflicts, of which more than 50% were resolved through individualized education. We also work closely with our local ODFW biologists to respond to public concerns and devise best practice for responding to wildlife calls.

The provision of grants to rehabilitation centers, as outlined in the bill, directly benefits organizations like Think Wild. The funds allocated for grants would assist Think Wild in continuing its care for injured or orphaned wildlife, ensuring that the rehabilitation efforts are adequately supported.

Think Wild also prioritizes public and youth wildlife education and conservation programs in order to promote wildlife coexistence and reduce human-wildlife conflicts. 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. The

establishment of an ODFW wildlife coexistence program, as proposed in HB 4148, would provide Think Wild with additional resources to engage in public education and outreach and decrease human-wildlife conflicts in Central Oregon.

Improving wildlife passage via wildlife crossings would also improve outcomes for people and animals in the state. At our wildlife hospital, 12% of patient admissions since 2020 have been due to vehicle collisions. The bill's focus on improving outcomes related to wildlife-vehicle collisions through technical guidance and updates to agency reports would contribute to the overall safety of wildlife. This would help in minimizing injuries to wildlife caused by vehicular accidents, aligning with the Think Wild's goals of rehabilitation and conservation.

The passing of House Bill 4148 would provide the state with financial support, resources, and a legislative framework to advance wildlife success in Oregon. The bill's comprehensive approach to disease prevention, wildlife coexistence, road safety, and invasive species management aligns closely with the goals and activities of Think Wild, ensuring a positive impact on the well-being of wildlife in Oregon.

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

Sincerely,



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