



**OREGON
WILD**

Formerly Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC)

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Oregon Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee
Informational Meeting: Update on Wolf Management in Oregon
Testimony of Oregon Wild

Senator Dingfelder, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Rob Klavins. I am the Wildlife advocate for Oregon Wild. We are a conservation organization that represents over 10,000 members and supporters who support our mission to protect and restore the wildlands, wildlife, and waters that make Oregon such a special place.

As a part of that mission we work to keep common species like elk and meadowlarks common. It also means working to restore wildlife like wolves and salmon that need help retaking their place on the landscape.

We want to see wolf recovery that works for everyone. We want to see a meaningful, healthy, and sustainable population of wolves and all other native wildlife. That includes seeing farmers, hunters, birdwatchers, and outfitters alike flourishing alongside wildlife.

Despite some serious misgivings, we supported the compromise wolf plan of 2005. We spent the next several years supporting ODFW's implementation of the plan, advocating for full funding, and defending against attacks on the plan and efforts to make it easier to kill endangered wildlife.

It's worth noting that in ²⁰⁰⁹2008, when the plan was put to its first test, the state fulfilled the spirit and letter of the plan. Though we didn't celebrate the decision to ultimately kill two of the state's then dozen or so wolves, we did not oppose the lethal control.

However in ensuing years we saw annual attacks on the plan and broader wildlife protections in the state legislature, at the ODFW Commission, and on the ground with continued wolf poaching. In 2011, ODFW was subject to increasingly intense pressure to kill wolves to address conflict. We, along with other conservation groups challenged the state's decisions in court. We are continuing to work with the state and stakeholders to get back to the wolf plan we thought we had in 2005. Though we can't share details, we believe we are close to a resolution that will hopefully be in front of the legislature this session.

In 2012, the state was barred from killing wolves and we were pleased to see non-lethal efforts to *prevent* conflict more seriously, comprehensively, and faithfully implemented. Not surprisingly wolf recovery got back on track, but along with the increase in wolf numbers, conflict *decreased* dramatically. That's what everyone says they want. Meanwhile in our neighboring states, wolf killing only fed controversy.

Much of last year's success was made possible by the foresight of the legislature that approved a compensation program and facilitated the implementation of non-lethal conflict prevention. The legislature also wisely opposed efforts to weaken safeguards and make it easier to kill endangered wildlife in Oregon.

The wolf issue tends to be full of misinformation and fear. Some say that wolves are decimating the livestock industry, wiping out game herds, and killing kids at the bus stop. Sadly the controversy around wolves and wildlife has less to do with the realities and more to do with broader conflicts that continue to divide our country and our state.

Over the years in this building, we've heard from some that the only solution to conflicts with endangered wildlife is to kill them. We disagree. And we are confident the overwhelming majority of Oregonians share that view.

In neighboring states we've seen that killing endangered wildlife doesn't solve problems. It only feeds controversy. Oregonians overwhelmingly value native wildlife. Rational actors in the livestock industry, conservation community, hunting community and government agencies are focusing on common-ground science-based solutions. With so many serious problems facing Oregon, that makes sense.

We rarely get a chance in this building to talk about the positive impacts of wildlife.

Wildlife provide tangible economic, ecological, social, and recreational benefits as well as those that are harder to quantify. In fact, healthy abundant populations of native wildlife living in places - tame and wild alike - are a part of what makes Oregon such a special place. It is evidence of a healthy state.

No one wants wildlife to impose hardships on anyone. But living with native wildlife is a responsibility shared by all Oregonians, not an onerous burden. In recent years we have focused on education, conservation, and *preventing* conflict – including supporting efforts to ensure funding for those efforts.

In Oregon we tend to do things better than other places. Especially when it comes to our shared natural heritage, we tend to do them right. We should strive to keep it that way.