

# High Country News

FOR PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THE WEST

## Double down on success

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**Peter Barry** | Aug. 31, 2018 | *From the print edition*

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once said, “Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.” Gloria Dickie’s investigation (“[Pay for Prey](https://www.hcn.org/issues/50.12/wolves-when-cattle-go-missing-in-wolf-territory-who-should-pay-the-price) (<https://www.hcn.org/issues/50.12/wolves-when-cattle-go-missing-in-wolf-territory-who-should-pay-the-price>),” *HCN*, 7/23/18) into Oregon’s flawed wolf compensation program was welcome sunlight for a state that prides itself on its conservation ethic, but whose leaders have regrettably thrown wolves to the self-serving cattlemen.

The cover photo reinforced the power of the mythical notion of the American cowboy, a myth that belies the planet-trashing truth. The grisly photo submitted by Todd Nash told another story. To be eligible for compensation (and for the state to kill wolves), livestock managers like Nash are rightly required to remove carcasses that serve as attractants, not use them as bait for photo ops.

Well-intentioned compensation programs have been consistently abused and have largely failed in their goal to increase tolerance among communities that fear wolves or people who benefit from escalating conflict. Taxpayers foot the bill for a program that encourages the very outcomes we seek to avoid.

Oregon’s program could be described as “pay up AND the wolf gets it!”

For a brief time, Oregon was a leader in wolf conservation. From 2013 to 2015, it was the only state in the nation that achieved the goals of increasing wolf numbers and diminishing livestock predation. No wolves had to be killed. As Oregon revises its wolf plan, Gov. Kate Brown and her wildlife agency have an opportunity to either double down on success, serving the majority of citizens and promoting a healthy ecosystem, or else follow failed models from states like Idaho and Wyoming.

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