

February 9, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

It has come to my attention that House Bill 2728 has held a public hearing today, 02/09/2021, and will hold an additional public hearing on 02/11/2021. I am writing to you on behalf of HammerDown Outdoors and Harney County Coyote Classic in opposition of this bill. I would like to offer my viewpoint on the proposed bill as an avid outdoorsman, a concerned citizen, and an Oregon conservationist. Thank you for the opportunity to voice my testimony in this controversial issue.

Proposed bill, HB 2728, "Prohibits person from conducting, or participating in contest, competition, tournament or derby that has objective of taking coyotes for cash and prizes." Simply labeling these events as "competition, derbies, or tournaments" puts a bad taste in the uninformed mouth. By uninformed, I do not mean unintelligent or mindless. But simply not physically immersed in such experiences themselves. To state that these events are held only due to cash/prize incentives, and the lust for blood shed, would be absurd. These events offer so much more to this industry and all participants. For example, they allow the opportunity for introverts like me to branch out and meet alike people with similar passions and interests. It also opens a huge avenue for the economy, both for the town the event is held in and for people who are looking to/are making a living in the outdoor industry. I am a small business owner in the industry of outdoors/hunting, I live for conservation and I connect with the animals I love and pursue. Stating that "coyote derbies" are only creating a blood bath event for people who want to kill is an extreme insult to 99% of us. That is not at all what any of this is about. Ethical hunters who love the animals they pursue do not enter these events and spend a fortune just for an excuse to go and kill as many animals as possible. The coyote is my all-time favorite living organism, yet I harvest many of them every year because I recognize the need for proper conservation. Where do you think the furry sleeve cuffs, and hood outlines of your fancy fur coat come from? Coyotes and other animals harvested by hunters or trappers, that are later sold at fur auctions. This is an emotional topic for some, and I can see why as a lifelong outdoorsman. If one is not involved in such activities, they have a removed perspective, as they are not experiencing it first-hand. That is a big factor that is hardly considered in these instances.

An argument often made opposing these "competitions", states that shooting coyotes doesn't lower their population, but actually increases it and will force coyotes to feed on livestock and big game animals. While it may be a valid argument, it is not completely true. Coyotes breed once per year as do many other mammals. Female coyotes may be pushed to breed more during breeding season and rear larger coyote pup litters as a result of population declines, but let's not forget they can only do so once per year. If hunters are actively controlling coyote populations throughout the whole year, there is less coyotes around by the time it is breeding

season, therefore there are less coyotes available to breed. Population is dependent upon location as well. Some regions of the state have a larger coyote density, such as Eastern Oregon. Let's also not forget that it is physically impossible to survey and count every single living coyote in the state of Oregon, population estimations will be skewed.

The average coyote has a home range of up to 60 square miles and will move across state boundaries. These are what we refer to as "transient coyotes". Meaning they are not a member of a pack and survive solo. These are commonly young coyotes that have recently detached from their natal pack, sometimes even old or sick coyotes that have been exiled from their pack. They have a huge home range. This is a large cause for the belief that shooting coyotes will not decrease populations/rid them of your property or certain public lands. For example, if a person shoots and harvests ten coyotes on a plot of land, there will still be more coyotes to be seen or heard in the coming weeks/months and this cycle will continue. This is largely transient coyotes roaming about their large home ranges. Which is why we as hunters and conservationists of the state must stay on top of it. Predator control is a proven way to protect livestock and big game populations. Yes, there may very well be more coyotes in the spring, but we did our part to control the predator populations for the year after breeding and birthing, which in turn will protect those livestock and big game populations for said year. Then, we essentially restart from scratch the next year to continue keeping pace with these recently re-established populations.

Studies show that Central Oregon alone has lost roughly 61% of the Mule Deer population that we had in 2002. Now, there are numerous factors weighing into that catastrophe. Predation by prolific predators, such as coyotes, being one of them. I have witnessed first-hand what controlling predators in one specific area can do to help improve other animal populations in the area. Coyotes cannot simply be hazed away from land as they are an opportunistic predator and scavenger, they will always find a way and that is why their populations have continued to soar throughout history. They can eat just about anything and live in any climate.

Where is the benefit in limiting and prohibiting legal hunting methods for hunters in Oregon? Aside from the emotional response from those who simply do not understand and refuse to understand these practices. There are absolutely no negative impacts on wildlife management in coyote hunting through "contests or derbies". I have a lot more to add but I know others will write in and cover those bases. If HB 2728 passes, you can expect backlash from the outdoor/conservation community as well as continual decline of important game populations and local economies. Thank you for your time.

Cam H.

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