



OREGON HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

Protecting Oregon's Wildlife, Habitat and Hunting Heritage

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Testimony for HB 2548 -February 2, 2021. House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Good afternoon Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ken McCall, Vice President of Oregon Hunters Association.

I am here in support of HB 2548, representing hunter conservationists working toward improving wildlife migration passage across Oregon. It is no secret Oregon lags behind most if not all western states and Canada in providing barrier free wildlife passage on our highways. As hunter conservationists we are obviously interested in reducing the impacts of wildlife/vehicle collisions on our ungulate and human populations statewide. We also recognize the creation of safe wildlife passage infrastructure benefits numerous species of wildlife. The two-year camera study at the 2012 Lava Butte underpass structure on highway 97 documented 40+ species using underpass. Mule Deer, chipmunk, squirrel, and humans were the top five users. The human element is due to Lava Butte area being a high use recreation destination area.

Our partners at ODFW and ODOT indicate a short list of criteria to help identify wildlife passage barriers and fixes for those barriers:

-Sound scientific data on ungulate/other wildlife use, -physical evidence and data of animal/vehicle collisions -proper design to accommodate passage that fits the landscape, -long range planning, and a funding source. HB 2834 directed ODFW and ODOT to develop action plans addressing wildlife passage improvements, both agencies are making solid progress in addressing those action plans, funding is the missing link.

Specific to the Lava Butte and Gilchrist underpasses, there was a big financial difference between the two. Wildlife underpasses are ineffective without funnel fencing. Fencing was funded, included and installed at Lava butte creating an effective near 90% reduction in wildlife vehicle collisions. While there was a conscious choice to build a second Hwy 97 underpass just north of Gilchrist, based on GPS collar data, design and success at Lava Butte the estimated \$950 to \$1MM fencing cost was unavailable.

A collation of hunter conservation partners joined federal and state agencies, ungulate migration advocates and wildlife advocates to voluntarily raise the fence funds. The collation has added many new partners since we started the effort and currently has raised well over \$800. One of our newest partner/contributors is the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF). The effort has been rewarding but is not a viable model for future wildlife passage funding. These efforts require a much wider ranging funding model.

OHA and other conservation organizations continue to put funds, grants and volunteer labor into the habitat that serves migrating wildlife in the Fort Rock area, winter ungulate range served by the Gilchrist and Lava Butte underpasses.

Passage of HB 2548 can help facilitate the ability of ODOT and ODFW to meet the requirements of HB 2834 by studying options to fund wildlife passage improvements.

A brief list of contributors follows.

Thank You for the opportunity to testify,

Partners in funding Gilchrist fencing
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Mule Deer Foundation
Oregon Hunters Association
Oregon Wildlife Foundation
US Forest Service - Deschutes NF
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Materials Match)
Pittman-Robertson Funds
ODOT Material Source Program
Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund
VIA: Pew Charitable Trusts
VIA: OCRF Grant to Oregon Hunters Association
VIA: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Mule Deer Initiative
Olseth Family Foundation
Oregon Chapter: The Wildlife Society
AAA of Oregon