



Soda Mountain Wilderness Council

P.O. Box 512 • Ashland, Oregon 97520

February 2, 2022

Written Testimony in support of HB 4130-1
to the Oregon House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Dear Chair Marsh and Committee members,

We are a charter member of the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition, consisting of over 17 organizations and state and federal agencies representing a broad range of interests, including the Oregon Hunters Association and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.

The Coalition's goal is to identify and establish a premier wildlife crossing along I-5 between Ashland and the California border as part of a future network of dedicated over and under-crossings in the area. This stretch of freeway bisects the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and cuts a wide path through the Siskiyou Crest. This is a critical linkage area where wildlife migrate east-to-west between Oregon and California's coastal mountains to the volcanic peaks of the Cascade mountain range. Interstate 5 is a major impediment to wildlife in this area and the site of many ODOT roadkill reports. Oregonians and others will all benefit from a safer I-5.

In the past six months, the Coalition has identified seven potential crossing sites and has raised over \$125,000 for a privately contracted feasibility study. The Coalition is working closely with ODOT Region 3 staff to assure a coordinated effort. The study will be completed by November, 2022, when we will select the best location and proceed to the engineering design phase. ODOT requires the full planning costs in hand before they begin the engineering design work.

The Soda Mountain Wilderness Council fully supports HB4130-1 because it will help fund the Coalition's project and the more than 25 million dollars of important projects in the pipeline throughout Oregon.

And finally, the funding in HB4130-1 will be critical as a state match as ODOT applies to the new federal Wildlife Crossing Grant Program in the IJA infrastructure bill. We want to bring this money home to Oregon to help protect motorists and create safe wildlife passages on our highways.

Sincerely,

Dave Willis

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