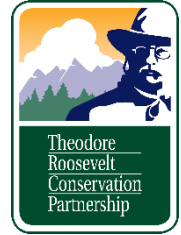


THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
To guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish
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February 3, 2022

Re: Statement of The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership in support of HB 4130-1, the Wildlife Crossings Investment Act

Chair Marsh and members of the House Interim Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Michael O'Casey, and I am the Pacific Northwest Field Manager for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP). Inspired by the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, the mission of the TRCP is to *guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish* by uniting and amplifying our partners voices to strengthen policy for fish and wildlife habitat and enhance public access to quality hunting and fishing opportunities. We work with 60 organizational partners, 117,000 members nationwide and more than 3,000 members here in Oregon. The TRCP and 81 of our Oregon based members are providing testimony today in support of HB 4130-1.

Oregonians value our robust populations of wildlife that move and migrate throughout Oregon. HB 4130, or the Wildlife Crossings Investment Act, is a commonsense bill that would allocate at least \$5 million dollars from the general fund to the Oregon Department of Transportation to create the first dedicated funds for the planning, design, and implementation of additional, and much needed, wildlife crossings in our state. A recent analysis found that Oregon has the highest likelihood of wildlife crashes among West Coast states. In 2019, the ODOT recorded over 6,100 wildlife-vehicle collisions, resulting in damage, injury, and fatalities to motorists and significantly impacting our wildlife. This is likely an undercount as researchers believe that the actual number of wildlife-vehicle collisions in Oregon are at least two times the number reported.

The Solution - Wildlife Crossings

1. Finding ways to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions is a win-win for drivers & wildlife. Fortunately wildlife crossings – such as underpasses, overpasses, directional fencing, and other measures to help get animals safely across roads—are highly effective.
2. Just to name a few examples - Oregon's very own Lava Butte underpass reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions by more than 85%; Colorado's wildlife crossings on state highway 9 have reduced WVCs by 89%, Utah saw a 98.5% reduction in deer mortalities when it built two animal underpasses on a stretch of highway that blocked traditional migratory routes. And finally, in Arizona, a fencing project linking three existing crossing structures on SR 260 reduced elk-vehicle collisions by 98 percent over a six-year span.
3. There is broad bipartisan support for wildlife crossings from voters across Oregon. In a 2020 Pew-commissioned poll conducted by the firm GBAO, 86% of Oregonians favor constructing more wildlife crossings on roads and highways; 75% of voters from across the political and geographic spectrum support increased funding to build more wildlife crossings on roads and highways.

Cost Effectiveness of Wildlife Crossings

The costs of building wildlife crossings varies by site and other factors, and can range pretty widely, from \$250,000-600,000 for a large mammal underpass to perhaps \$7 million for a double span overpass. But with 85-98 percent reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions, the structures can pay for themselves over a relatively short time horizon.

Case Study: Colorado State Highway 9

Before construction there were 56.4 mule deer and elk carcasses reported/year, at a cost of over \$500,000/year. During 2015 and 2016 the Colorado Department of Transportation constructed seven wildlife crossings with 10 miles of wildlife funnel fencing a cost of roughly \$10M. After the completion of the project, the number of carcasses in the project area decreased by 89% and the project is expected to pay for itself in ~22 years, long before the 75-year lifespan of the project.

Need for State and Federal Funding

1. Oregon has a challenge with wildlife-vehicle collisions, which endangers drivers and wildlife. But we also have the solution. Wildlife Crossings are effective proven solutions, they can pay for themselves over relatively short time horizons, and they are widely supported by the public and by diverse stakeholders.
2. Wildlife-vehicle collision hotspots have been identified in numerous locations across the state, including along Highway 20 near Juntura, on highway 20 near Sisters, I-5 between Asland and the OR-CA border, on I-84 near Meecham, and in several places on highway 97 in Central Oregon. Funding needs are estimated at around \$25 million to address these known hotspots.
3. Funding is key. NGO support can be a piece of the puzzle, but state and federal investment is also needed.
4. Fortunately, this issue is getting national attention and for the first time ever, dedicated funding for wildlife crossings has been included in the federal infrastructure bill. \$350 million will be available over the next five years.
5. Oregon can be competitive for these dollars by allocating state funding that can be invested right away and that can be leveraged for federal grants, many of which have match requirements.

In closing, HB 4130 will invest at least \$5 million dollars in targeted projects which will reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions to make our roads safer for people and wildlife. These dollars can also be used for federal grant match requirements, allowing Oregon taxpayers dollars to be leveraged for a greater return on this initial investment.

Please support this important legislation for Oregon's wildlife and safety alike. Thank you for considering my comments in support of HB 4130.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Casey on behalf of 81 Oregon based TRCP member supporters



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Anna	Jesse	Beaverton	OR
Rick	Rasmor	Rhododendron	OR
Matthew	DeLong	Portland	OR
Joseph	Janowicz	Gold Beach	OR
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