

Submitter: Ellie Gage

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB471

In their article Livestock depredation by wolves and the ranching economy in the Northwestern US, Muhly and Musiani (2009) suggest that if ranchers cannot survive financially, due to wolf depredation or any combination of issues threatening the economic viability of the ranch, ranches may be sold and the land developed, leading to habitat loss and fragmentation, and threatening the success of wildlife conservation. The authors found that declining cattle prices already have many ranches operating in the red. Wolf depredation on livestock exacerbates the problem of maintaining the financial viability of some ranches in the intermountain west; at the same time, increasing land prices may make the justification of maintaining working lands difficult or impossible, ultimately resulting in the development of working lands that are critical habitat required for the survival of many wildlife species. The goal of the authors was to raise awareness of the existing financial burdens borne by ranchers operating in areas of wolf colonization in the intermountain west, and the importance of maintaining privately-owned working lands as habitat to benefit wolves.

Supporting working lands is what motivates me in my job as Oregon Producer Outreach with Western Landowners Alliance. To me, the worst-case scenario for our collective future is if livestock producers operating on an already razor-thin budget decide to sell large, well-managed working lands for real estate development. Wildlife will suffer, rural communities will lose a valuable part of their culture and economy, and our country will become more dependent on imported beef from countries where deforestation for pasture is occurring at an alarming rate, animal and human welfare regulations do not exist, and our country becomes more reliant on these unsustainable practices of livestock production.

Thankfully, there is a different future scenario: landscapes where people, livestock, and wildlife all thrive, where effective and practical management practices work in concert with constructive state and federal policy to reduce conflicts, and where economic solutions support resilient, biodiverse working lands. The clearest path to this vision is the 4C's framework, a document created by the Conflict Reduction Consortium, a diverse group of stakeholders collaborating with the goal of supporting working lands and wildlife. I have uploaded the 4Cs framework as testimony separately from this document. Please refer to it for details.

The 4Cs (compensation, conflict prevention, control (lethal) and collaboration) comprises a systems-based conflict reduction framework that supports conservation and provides opportunities to address the social, ecological, and economic situations unique to each region, community, and operation within a landscape shared by

people and wildlife. This framework allows the social and financial burden associated with ecological conflicts within shared landscapes to be balanced.
I appreciate your consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Ellie M. Gage

Muhly, T.B., and M. Musiani. 2009. Livestock depredation by wolves and the ranching economy in the Northwestern US. *Ecological Economics* 68: 2439-2450.