



The Oregon Wildlife Coalition Opposes HJR 5

HJR 5 could circumvent direct democracy in our state and silence Oregon voters on issues affecting wildlife -- a valued public trust resource. For that reason, the Oregon Wildlife Coalition opposes HJR 5, which would deprive Oregon citizens of their right to use the ballot initiative process to update, modernize and improve Oregon wildlife management based on changing values in the future.

Specifically, the most concerning provision is that the right to fish, hunt or harvest wildlife and gather wild foods is “...*subject only to laws enacted by the Legislative Assembly and rules adopted by state agencies to promote sound wildlife conservation and management...*”

By explicitly granting *only* the Legislative Assembly and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission this authority, and omitting the ballot initiative process, HJR 5 could strip Oregonians of their longstanding constitutional right to vote on important issues affecting wildlife—a natural resource held in the public trust. Oregon residents have a vested interest in safeguarding the initiative process from such sweeping change, and, as the vehicle of representative democracy in our state.

Further, a 2019 survey by the hunting interest groups the National Shooting Sports Foundation and Responsive Management found that the majority of Americans disapprove of trophy hunting and of trapping for money, for fur clothing, and for recreation.¹ The recent “America’s Wildlife Values” project found that 12% more Oregonians surveyed hold a “mutualist” view, which seeks to coexist with wildlife, than hold a “traditionalist” view of human mastery over wildlife.² That survey also found that nearly 71% of Oregonians agree that the U.S. should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.

Finally, including in our constitution the “right to fish, hunt or harvest wildlife” could also cost Oregon taxpayers millions of dollars, by opening the door to expensive legal challenges from individuals who want to argue that reasonable quotas, season closures, bag limits, land area closures, and other restrictions on types of hunting, trapping, and fishing methods are unconstitutional.

The Oregon Wildlife Coalition members include Audubon Society of Portland, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Oregon Wild, and Western Environmental Law Center.

¹ National Shooting Sports Foundation and Responsive Management, “Americans’ Attitudes toward Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting and Trapping 2019.” <https://asafishing.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Americans-Attitudes-Survey-Report-2019.pdf>

² M. J. Manfredo et al., “America’s Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.” Fort Collins, Colorado: Colorado State University, Department of Natural Resources, 2018. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/>