



February 6, 2023

Testimony in support of HB 2999 to the Oregon House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members,

Good afternoon. I'm Dr. Jack Williams, co-coordinator of the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition. The Coalition consists of over 17 organizations and state and federal agencies representing a broad range of interests, including KS Wild, Oregon Hunters Association, Southern Oregon University, The Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, and the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy.

In 2022, our Coalition raised \$125,000 in private and federal funds and hired a consultant to complete a Conceptual Design Study and Alternatives Analysis for eight potential wildlife crossings along Interstate 5 between Ashland and the California border. That study identified two overpass locations as our highest priority and recommended various improvements at the other six underpass and overpass sites. Our study area has several sections of highway with high rates of wildlife-vehicle collisions involving black bear, deer, elk, and mountain lions.

We coordinated closely with ODOT Region 3 to assure our sites matched their requirements and recommendations. The report was finalized in November 2022 and has been submitted to ODOT Region 3 for engineering and final design work for the overpasses. ODOT has added the two projects to the Oregon Transportation Improvement Plan and has allocated \$1.5 million to this project from the Oregon Legislature's 2022 Wildlife Crossing funding. In summary, we are making great progress but still have a long way to go!

We are grateful for last year's allocation, which was critical to keep our projects moving forward. Our Coalition strongly supports HB 2999's additional funding to OCRF in this biennium. This funding is essential to keep the planning, engineering, and construction moving forward on many needed Oregon wildlife crossing projects.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and please reach out anytime with questions. We hope you will join in support of House Bill 2999!

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