

Date: March 22, 2023

Elise Wolf  
PO Box 3500, PMB 409  
Sisters, OR 97759

To: Ways & Means Natural Resources Subcommittee  
Re: Request to restore Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package to the ODFW Budget

I am the director and wildlife rehabilitator for Native Bird Care, in Sisters, Oregon. I am personally testifying in support of restoring the Wildlife Coexistence Funding Package (WCFP), to the ODFW Budget.

The proposed WCFP gives this important agency the people-power and the funds to tackle human wildlife conflicts and substantially improve public education and encourage conservation.

The bill provides desperately needed professional staff to educate and advise the public on safe and harmless wildlife interaction, promote wildlife conservation to the public.

The function of the Oregon Department of Wildlife is changing radically from what this agency has historically been. These changes reflect widespread societal and cultural changes occurring generally.

- More people want to engage with and enjoy wildlife in non-lethal ways today than ever before.
- People today also seek to have a closer relationship to animals around their homes.
- For example, over 60 million people in the US feed birds now.
- Besides birds, people want to feed everyone else living wild in their yards – deer, raccoon, squirrels.

Sadly, much of the common knowledge about wildlife has been inspired by Disney movies and feel-good you-tube videos. Knowledge and understanding of wildlife is extremely poor, and often outright harmful.

Our wildlife conflicts are not just relegated to predators or problem species. Historically, funding has prioritized lethal solutions and programs (The Wildlife Services Program). Today this program has lost public confidence and incited anger among the public. The Wildlife Services program is a controversial program that in no way reflects current and predominant socio-cultural beliefs around wildlife.

What is needed in Oregon are non-lethal, wildlife-friendly solutions that seek to address the source of the conflict or problem. Public education, conservation advocacy, and more people to intervene and help the public is needed.

As a professional wildlife rehabilitator, I participate in the overwhelming task of educating the public. Like other wildlife rehabilitators, we save the state thousands of dollars in human-power costs by our performing part of the public education role. However, our organizations are small, are primarily volunteer driven, underfunded, and tasked with a huge workload.

Wildlife rehabilitators simply cannot provide an equal function to the program being suggested in WCFP. This Package provides additional ODFW trained biologist staff, and will develop the needed educational programs our society desperately needs regarding living with wildlife.

The WCFP also provides critically needed funding to wildlife rehabilitation centers to help support our efforts to educate and provide services to the public.

Finally, we need to be doing all we can to support Oregon's wildlife.

With the future of climate change here, larger human populations, and massive losses of habitat – the interaction between humans and animals is only going to increase. These interactions will not only result in more costs to the state and the public, but more impacts to wildlife.

Thank you,

Elise Wolf  
Sisters, OR