

Chair Helm, Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens, Members of the Committee:

Let me respectfully address you as all my relations, for we are, in the end, all connected. And, let me speak from the heart and start by saying, the word "we" for me means everyone, everyone from people to wildlife, from plants to trees, all beings great and small. And further, to begin in a way I have never done so before with testimony, to make the statement that, the proposed legislation is, in a phrase, "an answer to a prayer."

Yes, an answer to a prayer I had shared as spoken and written testimony before the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission, just over four years ago, relative to two individuals, brother and sister bobcats in Eugene.

And it was a story about life for one and death for the other, and began with a prayer, literally, for the one killed. It ended with a solution to prevent such a death from ever happening again, and frankly, wonderfully, this legislation, HB 4148 moves it closer to reality.

And the solution began with the question, " . . . how can ODFW . . . respond in the future . . . for all wildlife, not only in how to live with them, but also to protect them?" and continued as follows:



*Photo: Summer M. Tribble*

"In a word, policy.

Developing a policy that's not just clear and simple, but intelligent and adaptive to any encounter between humans and wildlife, whether urban or rural. A policy needed now, and that cultivates an attitude of serving and treating animals as unique individuals and living beings, not just another bobcat, a wild animal or "living thing."

. . . I'm here today not only to pray, but also to encourage ODFW to become visionary in all their wildlife policies . . . to think, speak and act with reverence for all life.

To listen is to love, and to listen also means responding to what one has heard. I am thankful for your listening ears today, but more importantly individuals, many human and all wildlife, will be grateful for your serious and immediate consideration – and action – in this regard.

And finally, when you develop these policies my heart will be filled with gratitude – with the deepest thankfulness I can feel, to the very core of my being."

That is what I said.

And let me say it again, to you. When this legislation is passed, it will be an answer to my prayer and so much more, so we – both people and wildlife – can live together in this world we call home, and gratitude will fill my heart to the core of my being.

"We" are all connected, and for me, this very legislation, affirms that; it's passage, helps to realize it for everyone.

With Respect and Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Albert LePage" followed by a small circular symbol.

Albert LePage, M.Ed. Science, B.S. Biology, Eugene, Oregon  
Member, *Society for Conservation Biology*