

Submitter: Donna Harris
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

Dear Co-Chair Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

Please build on the important progress at the state legislature in recent years by passing HB 2978.

Wildlife crossings are a highly effective tool that Oregon needs in more places. HB 2978 and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will:

- * Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways
- * Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding
- * Remove barriers that prevent animals from finding food, shelter, and mates

For 5 years I was involved with a central Oregon advocacy group for wildlife connectivity and wildlife crossings . I was tasked with counting all the deer and elk vehicle collisions per year on our Deschutes Co, ODOT roads, county roads , and City of Bend roads. The average number of deer killed yearly on all these roads combined in Deschutes Co.was 1000! This number is appalling and can be remedied by more wildlife crossings. Our chair of our advocacy group , Protect Animal Migration , under the umbrella of Oregon Wildlife Foundation ,was able to obtain grant money to help purchase funnel fencing for one of the crossings built under Hwy 97 south of Sunriver. I am also putting my money where my mouth is and made a large charitable distribution from my IRA last year to donate towards the crossings proposed over Hwy 20 west of Sisters to Suttle Lake where deer and elk vehicle collisions an number up to 600/ yr.! The public can only contribute limited funds, so we really need permanent state level funding.

The cost of these crossings pay for themselves in a relatively short time span, especially when it comes to public safety. One collision with a deer can cost up to \$17,000 with cost of insurance , cost of injuries or deaths. One collision with an elk can cost up to \$57,000 when considering all the above costs. Statewide these costs add up to almost \$92 million(2022 figures).

I strongly support HB 2978 and I hope you will seize this opportunity to prioritize public safety and restore wildlife habitat connectivity.

Sincerely,