

Submitter: Kyle Collins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

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

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2978.

As a resident of Central Oregon, I have been the direct beneficiary of the first large scale wildlife crossing efforts in the state.

Driving south from Bend on Highway 97 is now a much less harrowing experience, particularly in the fall months, as I am not constantly on edge wondering if a deer, elk, or other large creature will dart into incoming traffic.

As someone who is required to travel throughout Deschutes County for work, I appreciate these efforts immensely for the added safety and peace of mind they add to my commutes.

Additionally, as someone who believes our local wildlife is one of our most precious resources in Oregon, I am supportive of any and all efforts to maintain wildlife populations throughout the state.

Research over the past several years in ecology and population dynamics has shown that in order to maintain stable and healthy populations of animals, they must be able to move seamlessly across large landscapes in response to changing seasons, food availability, and simply to promote gene transfer among individuals.

If we want to maintain and recover populations of wildlife such as mule deer, then we must begin to tackle one of the largest sources of non-natural mortality, which comes from vehicles strikes and habitat fragmentation.

Wildlife crossing help these larger, charismatic species, but they also aid species of all shapes and sizes, all of whom play a crucial role in our natural systems.

These crossings are highly effective and Oregon needs more crossing structures.

While the under crossings at places like Lava Butte, Gilchrist, and others in Central Oregon are immensely beneficial for public safety and wildlife health, we simply need more of this type of infrastructure to ensure the long term health of our state.

HB 2978 and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will:

Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways;

Remove barriers to wildlife;

Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding

While Oregon has made some important investments in the this area over the last

decades, we still lag behind most of our neighboring states largely due to the sheer scale of the need and the lack of dedicated funding for projects.
Please build on this progress at the state legislature by passing HB 2978.

Sincerely,
Kyle Collins