



National Headquarters

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www.defenders.org

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 4, 2025

Re: HB 2980 Wildlife Stewardship

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Colin Reynolds. I am the Senior Advisor to the Northwest Program at Defenders of Wildlife (“Defenders”). Defenders is a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities, with over 40,000 members and supporters in Oregon. On behalf of Defenders, I am submitting the following comments in support of HB 2980. This bill would:

- 1) Establish Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (“ODFW”)’s Wildlife Stewardship Program.
- 2) Create three new wildlife coexistence positions throughout Oregon.
- 3) Establish a grant program to support Oregon’s wildlife rehabilitation centers.
- 4) Appropriate \$200,000 to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant Program.
- 5) Develop an educational campaign focused on living with wildlife in urban and suburban areas and minimizing human-wildlife conflict.

Coexisting with wildlife is integral to Defenders’ mission, and we have been at the forefront of coexistence efforts for decades across the United States. For example, our coexistence work includes supporting a beaver cost-share program in New Mexico, providing support to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s bear conflict reduction program, and supporting several coexistence projects in Oregon. Defenders staff work tirelessly to enable people and wildlife to share landscapes and support efforts to reduce conflicts that may occur with wildlife.

HB 2980 is an innovative bill that would improve ODFW’s capacity to reduce conflict and engage with the public while providing support for Oregon’s wildlife rehabilitation network. Defenders especially believes this support is timely as the Federal support, by which many of Oregon’s wildlife rehabilitation centers rely, is under increased jeopardy. This bill is also an example of good Department-partner collaboration, as the Wildlife Stewardship Program was developed by a diverse task force and is supported by ODFW and a strong coalition of conservation organizations.

In these uncertain times, we need to do our best to empower our government colleagues and the wildlife rehabilitation centers who work tirelessly in support of Oregon's wildlife. Defenders strongly supports HB 2980, and we encourage you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Reynolds', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Colin Reynolds
Senior Advisor, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife