



February 28, 2025

Sub: Testimony in opposition of SB 985

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and committee members, Cascadia Wildlands on behalf of our over 12,000 members and supporters urge you to vote against SB 985. Cascadia Wildlands is one of the stakeholder organizations that engaged in the development of the Oregon Wolf Plan and has consistently engaged in wolf conservation and recovery since wolves naturally recolonized Oregon. We are also a founding member of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition and Pacific Wolf Coalition. We oppose SB 985.

The wise adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is applicable to SB 985 because while you consider a \$2 million dollar allocation to a program that for nearly its entire existence had a max budget of \$200,000, ODFW had to cut a huge portion of its External Budget Advisory Committee Budget. Those cuts include a new wolf coexistence biologist who would have worked with livestock owners to reduce conflicts, the entire ODFW portion of the Anti-Poaching Initiative at \$670,852 and \$679,880 from Oregon State Police’s anti-poaching budget, for a total of \$1,279,084 cut from the Anti-Poaching Campaign.

The current service level for the rest of the wolf program is approximately \$1.22M, \$1.018M of which is General Fund. In other words, you would be spending nearly double ODFW’s entire wolf program budget to prop up a dysfunctional compensation program, without providing any new resources or staff, while slashing multi-agency anti-poaching efforts. Allocating that \$2 million to ODFW would be a true investment in coexistence and tolerance, allowing the agency to increase staffing and devote more time to working with producers to prevent conflict before it occurs. Investing in carcass removal and disposal facilities, for example, would be a game changer for removing attractants from the landscape. ODFW staff are stretched thin, travelling huge distances to provide advice and services. ODFW also relies on contracts with the federal Wildlife Services program to conduct portions of its predation investigations and to engage in non-lethal deterrence. Recent federal staffing cuts and plans for future reductions call the longevity of those federal positions into serious question. Please invest in prevention, not Band-Aids for preventable wounds.

As we have shared in our opposition to SB 777, we agree that the Wolf Compensation Fund program can be improved – a statewide livestock loss board with consistent criteria, trainings on the use of non-lethal coexistence tools, on-the-ground confirmation of the appropriate use of those tools, and regular meetings would address many of the complaints. Let’s take a holistic look at how to improve the program, not continue to go in circles about a deeply flawed multiplier proposal that ignores the other challenges with the program and would lead to ballooning funding requests session after session. Please oppose SB 985.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bethany Cotton". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of both words being capitalized and prominent.

Bethany Cotton, J.D.
Conservation Director
Cascadia Wildlands
Eugene, Oregon