



Date:	February 27, 2025
To:	Senator Jeff Golden, Chair Senator Todd Nash, Vice Chair Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Branden Pursinger
Subject:	Senate Bill 777-5 – Support

The Association of Oregon Counties offers this letter in **support of Senate Bill 777 and the -5 amendment.**

In 2011, the Legislature passed unanimously House Bill 3560. That bill directed Oregon’s Department of Agriculture to establish a wolf depredation compensation and financial assistance grant program to assist in the establishment of county programs. The bill stipulated grant money would be made available to assist counties in compensating individuals who suffer loss or injury as well as to compensate for missing livestock due to wolf depredation. The bill also allocated to the counties financial assistance to people who implement livestock management or nonlethal wolf control techniques. Those livestock management or nonlethal techniques could include, but are not limited to, range riders, spotlighting, pasture monitoring, fox lights, air cannons, non-lethal projectiles, carcass removal and drones with thermal optics, to name a few. That 2011 bill also stated counties needed to allocate a minimum of 30% of the funds they request to these livestock management or nonlethal deterrents. If a county wanted their constituents to be eligible for participation, a county was required to establish a county wolf depredation committee. **ORS 610.150** states the makeup of a county committee. They are required to include one sitting county commissioner, two livestock owners, two wolf conservationists, and two members of the business community (agreed upon by the 5 other members).

In 2012, eight counties were eligible for funding. One county received funds to cover the death or injury of livestock, but all eight counties received preventative, livestock management / nonlethal grant funds. In 2024, ten counties were awarded funds due to Death, Injury, or missing livestock and thirteen counties requested and received funds for livestock management / nonlethal actions.

Today, 18 of Oregon’s 36 counties have a wolf depredation committee. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife shows wolf packs to be located in or believed to be located in 17 counties including Marion, Clackamas, and Lane.

SB 777 attempts to make changes to the wolf depredation program that is beneficial both to the rancher as well as the county.

First it removes the “missing” category from what is eligible for grant funds. This is important as, although some county committees are able to receive documentation that the missing livestock is due to wolf activity, it is not always provided. Removing this component allows for the funds to go towards

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livestock that have truly been killed or injured because of wolf predation. Furthermore, removing missing livestock helps provide certainty to those that might question the programs validity and the state's Wolf Management Plan.

Second, the bill places a multiplier on the program depending on the type of livestock depredated. This multiplier will be used by the County Committees to advertise the program and expand to other ranchers within their jurisdictions. The intent is; by adding a multiplier to livestock depredations, the program becomes more appealing for ranchers. The program has been operational for over 10 years and the ranchers that use it, find it very beneficial. However, one Eastern Oregon County that has a wolf committee sees roughly 6% of all ranchers in their county participate in the program. One Southern Oregon County sees that number to be 10% of all ranchers within their county. This multiplier will help compensate ranchers for their loss while broadening the appeal to participate.

Finally, the -5 amendment raises the minimum threshold of funds that are required to go toward livestock management or nonlethal deterrence. The current statute requires counties to allocate a minimum of 30% of the funds requested from ODA to go towards these livestock management or nonlethal deterrence. To show counties continued commitment to "livestock management or nonlethal deterrence measures," and to show the desire to continue to be partners in the State's Wolf Plan, we support the -5 amendments change to increase the minimum deterrence amount to 50% of the funds requested.

The Wolf Plan is integral to having wolves on the landscape and just as integral to that plan, is the county compensation program. To uphold the counties portion of the State's Wolf Plan, we need to broaden the appeal and desire to participate. AOC believes SB 777 and the proposed amendment will do just that.

Thank you and the Association of Oregon Counties encourages this committee to adopt the -5 amendment.

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