

Submitter: Deborah Ferrer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB777

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire:

Though I have never farmed or ranched for a living, I have raised some livestock and other animals all my life. I truly appreciate how devastating losing animals can be for farmers and ranchers. However, SB 777 is not the solution.

Modern day farmers and ranchers have benefitted from an artificial environment that resulted from the eradication of predators since European settlers first migrated west across the U.S. Their business models are based on that artificial environment.

While farmers and ranchers have benefitted from past predator eradication, the natural ecosystems have not. Wolves are a critical keystone species, necessary for regulating prey populations. In doing so, wolves help support a healthy level of biodiversity in ecosystems. And this isn't just other animals in the ecosystem; by controlling herbivores, wolves also prevent overgrazing riparian zones, protecting vegetation, which contributes to water conservation. As we have come to understand their importance, efforts have been made to correct the mistakes of our past and restore wolf and other predator populations.

While it is undoubtedly easier to raise livestock in the absence of natural predators, the cost of that practice has been loss of biodiversity across Oregon. I think most of us understand the value of "living within our means" from a financial standpoint. But when will we learn to "live within our means" from an ecological standpoint? Why must we always look at the cost of wolf predation to ranchers, rather than the cost of ranching to other species?

Maybe ranchers should reimburse taxpayers for the cost to restore the biodiversity their ranching practices have destroyed. That idea has at least as much merit as asking taxpayers to reimburse ranchers seven times the cost of wolf predation to their ranching.

Maybe it's time for ranchers that are losing livestock to update their business models.

Vote NO on SB 777.

Deborah Ferrer

The Dalles, Oregon