



House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon

March 18, 2025

Re: HB 3657 (wildlife damage compensation)

Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair Finger McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC), a coalition of wildlife conservation groups working proactively and collaboratively to advocate for policies that are science based and humane and reflect the state's conservation values. Members of the coalition are Bird Alliance of Oregon, Cascadia Wildlands, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Voters Oregon, Humane World for Animals, Oregon Wild, Think Wild, and Western Environmental Law Center.

OWC is neutral on House Bill 3657, with several concerns and suggestions for improvement.¹

HB 3657 would create a four-year pilot program, with a \$600,000 general fund appropriation, to pay compensation for damage caused by wildlife to agricultural crops and infrastructure, and for measures to prevent such damage. To qualify for the program, a person would need to first use "[b]est preventive measures," which would be defined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) in its administrative rules.

OWC supports the aspects of HB 3657 that promote living with wildlife and the use of nonlethal measures to prevent wildlife damage. For example, the program is framed in the introductory section as a program "to encourage coexistence with Oregon wildlife." The program also would provide compensation for nonlethal measures such as repellants, barriers, and "time spent on nonlethal activities such as hazing." (Section 1(5).) In addition, to be eligible for the program, a person would need to show they first used "best preventive measures" to prevent the wildlife damage, and that they did not do anything to attract or encourage the wildlife damage. (Section 2(4).)

However, HB 3657 should do more to prioritize nonlethal measures to prevent wildlife damage. While the definition of "[e]ligible preventive measure[s]" (measures for which compensation could be provided) refers only to nonlethal measures, it does not expressly preclude compensation for lethal measures. It should do that, or legislators should clarify that intent. Nonlethal measures for which compensation is provided also should be independently verified by ODA.

¹ Our comments apply to the base bill and the proposed -1 amendments, which appear to propose only technical changes.

HB 3657 also should provide further direction to ODA with respect to the definition of “best preventive measures,” or should include a definition in the bill. The only direction in the bill is to have the definition include “the provision of hunting access, either to the public or to individuals by permission.” (Section 3(6).) HB 3657 should also require the definition to include the use of the best available nonlethal measures and should require nonlethal measures to be used, and verified, before any lethal measures may be used. ODA also should be required to consult with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in developing the definition of “best preventive measures.”

Finally, we are concerned that this pilot program will take Oregon farther down a slippery slope of creating expectations of compensation for the ordinary consequences of living with wildlife, and that those expectations may tend to reduce tolerance for wildlife instead of increase it.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Brian Posewitz

On behalf of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition:

Bird Alliance of Oregon

Cascadia Wildlands

Defenders of Wildlife

Humane Voters Oregon

Humane World for Animals

Think Wild

Oregon Wild

Western Environmental Law Center