



HUMANE VOTERS | OREGON

Testimony of Humane Voters Oregon on HB 2403 House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

March 23, 2025

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

Humane Voters Oregon is a nonprofit organization that works in Oregon’s political process and elections to promote humane treatment of animals. We are not affiliated with any other state or national organization.

Humane Voters Oregon opposes HB 2403.

HB 2403 would authorize formation of special governmental taxing districts to raise money to kill wildlife deemed a threat to private property. Animals that could be targeted are bears, cougars, gray wolves, beavers, bobcats, fishers, martens, minks, muskrats, otters, raccoons, red foxes, gray foxes, feral swine, coyotes, rabbits, and "rodents or birds that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products or activities."¹

Although the bill would allow the money to be used for “both nonlethal and lethal methods,” (Section 1(7)), nothing *requires* any of the money to be spent on nonlethal methods or requires that nonlethal methods be tried before lethal methods. Instead, the money will be used, as it was in the past (before a similar program sunset in 2022), to help pay for general operations of the federal “Wildlife Services” program in Oregon.

Humane Voters Oregon opposes HB 2403 because Wildlife Services, a program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, overemphasizes the killing of wildlife – using cruel methods including leghold traps, neck snares, shooting from planes and gassing dens of pups – as a solution to human-wildlife conflict. (See [‘That’s a bloodbath’: How a federal program kills wildlife for private interests](#), NPR investigation (2024); [Exposed – USDA’s Secret War on Wildlife](#) (short documentary film); [The Rogue Agency](#), Harper’s Magazine (2016).)

¹ “Predatory animals” is defined in HB 2403 as “animals listed in ORS 497.655 and bears.” (Section 1(6).) Animals listed as “predatory animals” in ORS 497.655(b) are “those animals listed in ORS 610.002, black bears, cougars, fur-bearing mammals and gray wolves.” Animals listed in ORS 610.002 are "feral swine," "coyotes, rabbits, rodents or birds that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products or activities," but to not include "game birds" or "nongame birds" determined by the Fish and Wildlife Commission "to be in need of protection" or "[b]eavers." However, “fur-bearing mammals,” which are included among the animals “listed in ORS 497.655” and therefore included in the definition of “predatory animals” under HB 2403, are defined in ORS 496.004 to include “beaver, bobcat, fisher, marten, mink, muskrat, otter, raccoon, red fox and gray fox.”

In the last year for which data is available, Wildlife Services killed 124,826 animals in Oregon, including 3,202 coyotes, 114 mountain lions, 237 bears and 84 beavers. ([Wildlife Services Program Data Reports](#), PDR G, filtered by state.) Much of this killing, especially for coyotes, was directed at general population reduction instead of killing specific animals causing problems.

Wildlife Services continues to emphasize killing wildlife to address human-wildlife conflict even though scientific evidence increasingly shows it does not work. [Killing Coyotes Is Not As Effective As Once Thought, Researchers Say](#), National Public Radio (2019); [Scientific Opinion Letter](#), Yellowstone Ecological Research Center (2023). An entire book has been written to make that point. [Coyote America: A Natural and Supernatural History](#) (2016).

HB 2403 also shows an intent to make “predator damage control” unaccountable to the public. Section 8 says no one other than a county board, an owner of land in one of the districts, a district advisory board or a city in a district could go to court to enforce any of its provision.

Instead of directing more money at a program that is out of touch with current values related to the treatment of wildlife, Oregon needs a broader conversation on managing and funding efforts to address human-wildlife conflict. Humane Voters Oregon would appreciate an opportunity to participate in that discussion.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Brian Posewitz
Director