



Locally Grown  
and  
GROWING STRONG

## **House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources & Water March 24, 2025**

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

Oregon Farm Bureau is in strong support of House Bill 2403, which authorizes the formation of Livestock and Community Protection Districts—also known as predator control districts—in Oregon counties.

OFB is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing more than 6,500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech.

There are growing challenges across Oregon's communities caused by predatory animals. Coyotes, bears, geese and other predators are causing increasing harm to our farms, ranches, and ecosystems. From livestock losses and crop damage to wildlife imbalances and human-wildlife conflicts, the need for a flexible, local approach to predator management has never been clearer.

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### **Background**

This concept isn't new. HB 3188, passed in 2015, created this program, which sunset in 2022. In 2022, OFB advocated for HB 4080 to renew the program; the bill received a public hearing but did not move forward. The difference between HB 2403 and the 2022 version is that it ties the definition of "predatory animals" to existing Oregon statute (ORS 497.655) and explicitly adds bears due to their growing impact.

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### **Why HB 2403 Matters**

HB 2403 allows landowners to voluntarily form Livestock & Community Protection Districts to fund local services that prevent, reduce, and mitigate predator-related damages. This imposes no costs on the general fund. It simply gives landowners the option to self-organize and self-fund a solution they need.

HB 2403 would provide a voluntary mechanism for agricultural and timber producers to maintain the effectiveness of services within the county without imposing a tax on the general public. Producers are given the ability to contribute to the funding of the county's trapping program and free up money to go to other county services—such as law enforcement or road improvements.

Without effective predator control, our producers experience significant losses of livestock (and their offspring) that they cannot absorb. This bill is important to the successful continuation of production agriculture in many rural counties. Our communities need this support/option.

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## Key Provisions

- Eligibility & Petition:
  - Landowners with 10 or more acres of eligible land (agricultural, forest, or mixed use) can petition to form a district.
  - At least 10 petitioners owning 10,000+ acres combined must sign.
  - Petitions must include district name, boundaries, petitioner details, and reasons for forming the district.
- District Formation Process:
  - Requires a public hearing and approval by the county governing body.
  - The county may set additional criteria by ordinance.
- District Governance:
  - A five-member advisory board is appointed to oversee the district, including livestock producers and forestland owners.
    - A local advisory board ensures transparency and community direction, with representation from forestland owners, livestock producers, and other stakeholders.
  - The board meets publicly and can recommend funding rates annually.
- Funding & Charges:
  - Landowners pay:
    - \$2 per acre for tax lots 10+ acres.
    - \$50 flat fee for lots under 10 acres.
  - Charges may be adjusted yearly based on actual county costs.
  - Landowners can opt in or out of the charges but opting in later costs 3x the annual charge for that year.
- Service & Enforcement:
  - Counties won't provide predator damage services to properties that opt out or are delinquent on payments.
  - Charges do not create a lien on property.
  - Only counties, landowners, advisory boards, or cities can enforce the provisions.

## Why Oregon Needs Livestock & Community Protection Districts

- Predators cause real financial harm to ranchers. These losses can devastate small operations and disrupt local food systems.
- Some predator populations grow unchecked which impacts ecosystems, hunting opportunities, and rural economies.
- Increasing bear and cougar sightings near homes, schools, and recreation areas underscore the need for proactive population management.
- This program supports humane, regulated methods under state and federal guidelines. It's about responsible management, not eradication.

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### A Timely Solution

Federal Wildlife Services personnel are being laid off—over 400 nationally just last month. Here in Oregon, ODA did not receive funding for wildlife services in its recent budget allocation. In the absence of federal and state capacity, our local communities need tools like HB 2403 to protect livestock, crops, and people.

There is some concern from the opposition that Wildlife Services would be funded to kill wildlife without having to use or even consider non-lethal methods. Some testimony noted that nonlethal wildlife conflict reduction should be prioritized. We agree. The goal here is to protect all animals.

Oregon Farm Bureau does not support a haphazard approach. Instead, we encourage this committee to support these efforts and give counties an option for dealing with predators in their communities. Our folks use a host of management tools including fencing, flagging, flares, netting, and more. Management absolutely must include non-lethal methods.

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### Final Thoughts

This is local government at its best: landowners coming together, self-organizing, self-funding, and taking shared responsibility to protect their communities, economies, and ecosystems. Livestock & Community Protection Districts provide solutions driven by local knowledge and responsibility.

Wildlife management requires partnership, flexibility, and accountability. HB 2403 delivers all three. This bill provides Oregonians with a common-sense, locally driven, and accountable way to protect their land, communities, and livelihoods.

Thank you.



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