

Submitter: Gordon Jones  
On Behalf Of: Lake Creek Lodge  
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2403

I am writing to strongly oppose HB 2403. Scientific proof that the practices of Wildlife Services control livestock damage is markedly lacking. In fact, the best available science shows that killing carnivores worsens conflicts with livestock. In addition, countless taxpayer dollars are wasted by spending far more to kill predators than the actual damage those predators cause. HB 2403 does not require recipients of district funds to use or even consider nonlethal alternatives, which abound. Given Wildlife Service's record for emphasizing killing of wildlife as its preferred solution to human-wildlife conflict, any state-created funding mechanism for the program should include requirements to consider and use effective nonlethal alternatives like livestock guardian animals, foxlights, penning, fladry, range riding, and livestock carcass disposal.

My experience on the Wolf Depredation Committee for Deschutes County has led me to the conclusion that this program needs to be further developed and controlled, or it will lead to abuse by those ranchers unwilling to consider changing their ranching methods to coexist with wolves. It should be strengthened to include the following:

1. Ranchers that want to enroll in the program to potentially receive funding for non-lethal prevention, or compensation in the case of wolf depredations, should be required to attend an educational forum where they learn the value of wildlife on public lands, how to coexist with wolves, and how to manage their ranching programs to avoid conflicts. There are responsible ranchers available to teach these classes.
2. They should be required to sign up for the program and commit to implementing reasonable changes to their operations and employing preventive measures. A good sample application would be helpful.
3. Applications for funding should include a scaled map of their lands, including any public land allotments, and the grazing program that they currently use, how they might change their management program to accommodate and coexist with wolves, and what preventive measures will best work with their land and livestock operation.
4. They should demonstrate that they understand the consequences of violating the Environmental Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act and should agree to follow the protocols established by Oregon State Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife in reporting wolf activity and any signs of depredations.

5. Ranchers in the program that are granted funding for depredations or preventative measures should be required to provide annual evidence that they have employed those measures and report how they have worked.

6. It should be made clear that abuse of or violations of this program, or the laws protecting wildlife, that lead to the death of wolves, other predators or wildlife, such as the poisoning of three wolves and two golden eagles recently near Imnaha in 2024, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

This bill also includes a provision specifically designed to prevent the public from holding the special districts accountable. This bill is unacceptable. Coexistence with essential native predators is key, especially in this age of extinction.