

Submitter: Donna Harris
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support HB 2978-A.

Wildlife crossings are highly effective and Oregon needs more crossing structures. HB 2978-A and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will:

I was a volunteer and supporter of a central Oregon mule deer advocacy group called Protect Animal Migration. We worked with ODFW and ODOT wildlife biologists , and the Oregon Hunters Asso.to help improve the populations of the declining mule deer in central Oregon. These populations are only at 50% sustainability! Several actions we can take to help these populations are to decrease deer/ vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity and protections. Both of these actions can be met with building more wildlife crossings. Since I was tasked for 5 yrs. to determine the annual number of deer/ vehicle collisions on central Oregon's county roads, ODOT roads, and Bend city roads , I determined that there was an average of 1000 deer/vehicle collisions yearly just in Deschutes Co. ! This is an astonishing number! We advocated for more crossings along Hwy 97 hotspots south of Bend. Now two more crossings have been constructed and several more are being proposed. We were able to obtain a grant to help with the cost of the funnel fencing needed for the Gilchrist crossing on Hwy. 97. Other western states have found the actual cost savings and return on investment of building crossings for wildlife by reducing insurance rates from collisions that cause vehicle damage and sometimes the loss of human lives. These states have now built dozens of crossings each compared to Oregon's few crossings. We need these for the following reasons:

- Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways

- Remove barriers to wildlife

- Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding

Please build on the important progress at the state legislature over the past five years by passing HB 2978-A.