

Dear House Committee Members on Agriculture and Natural Resources

I am writing as a resident of Bend and as the Coordinator of a collaboration of citizens advocating for wildlife crossings and for preservation of fragmented wildlife habitat, Protect Animal Migration. We are citizen advocates for ODOT, ODFW, USFS and their projects to keep our transportation routes safe and our environment sustainable.

Wildlife has been left out of conversations over decisions for recreational developments here in Bend, and in the rest of Deschutes County. As a result, wildlife is losing its place here. Wildlife habitats are increasingly fragmented and destroyed, and the impacts from recreationists is stressing wildlife with fatal consequences.

Wildlife vehicle collisions occur at the rate of 1000 per year and at a cost of \$6500 per collision. We have only two wildlife crossings, and they are located at the bottom of the watershed and corridor where deer and elk move from the wild and scenic portion of the Deschutes River and associated tributaries. This is one of the last undisturbed places where wildlife can cross the river and migrate between their summer and winter habitats. Once it is developed and open to more recreationists, they will avoid and even abandon this area. This will leave them little room to live here. Already they have been pushed out of habitat all along the Highway 97 and feeder streets that comprise this migratory corridor.

Research has shown that hikers and hikers with dogs, stress wildlife as far away as 200 meters. This can cause them to lose their reproductive capability, move them away from habitat "patches" and choke them off from migrating to other much needed habitat patches.

In all the decisions regarding development and the benefits of tourism (22,000 per day during peak months), wildlife has been ignored. Most county and city entities base their decisions on data on wildlife statistics that are decades out of date and therefore assume that wildlife has ample space. We do not know if this is something that Bend Park and Rec. has considered. We have given them information on the effects of stress on wildlife.

So please pass HB2027 to ensure that at least one place remains where wildlife can thrive and can move to other patches amidst what many of us see as tourism developed at the expense of the environment and of the wildlife that is barely surviving here. Hikers and bikers have many options here to recreate. We have hundreds of miles of trails. There are generous opportunities for them. However, the options for wildlife are growing fewer, and a tipping point is soon approaching.

Thank you for your consideration

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