



## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

# AGENDA REQUEST & STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** December 20, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Program

**BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

In October, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) staff inquired about the County's potential interest in creating a Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee.

According to ODFW staff, there are currently no known wolf packs or areas of consistent wolf activity within Deschutes County, but the occurrence of confirmed sightings of transient and dispersing wolves has increased in recent years, as it has throughout most of Eastern Oregon.

Asst. Wolf Biologist Jamie Bowles, ODFW, will attend the Board meeting on Monday, December 20, to answer questions about wolf activity in Oregon, and if needed, to answer questions about the department's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

**Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance program**

In 2011, the State Legislature created the Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance program, which is administered by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA).

Through this program, ODA provides pass-through grants to counties to establish and implement county wolf depredation compensation programs. Through the program:

- Compensation can be paid to residents who have livestock or working dogs that are killed or injured due to wolf depredation.
- Financial assistance can be provided to residents to assist them in implementing livestock management and/or nonlethal wolf deterrent techniques designed to discourage wolf depredation of livestock.
- Compensation can be paid to residents for livestock or working dogs that are missing due to wolf depredation.

- Compensation can be paid to counties to cover allowable expenses incurred while implementing a wolf depredation compensation program in their county.

ODA's Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Grant Program complements and supports Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan by working to proactively minimize wolf-livestock conflict and assist livestock producers experiencing wolf-related livestock losses.

ODFW staff have suggested that creating a compensation committee can be a proactive measure to make addressing potential future conflicts easier and more effective. If a committee was established, it would likely have an initial focus on preventative measures.

### **Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance program awards**

According to a recent article in *The Eastern Oregonian*, in 2020, ODA awarded \$130,164 to 12 counties, covering 37% of all grant requests. In 2019, counties were awarded \$251,529, or 58% of all grant requests. (Background information on historical grant funding for the State's grant program is also included in the Board's packet).

Both Crook and Jefferson counties appear to have previously applied for grant funding through the program in the past:

- Crook County's last grant award was in 2016
- Jefferson County's last award was in 2015

### **Timing and Committee Requirements**

The State's grant application deadline for grant funding is February 15, 2022, but applications are accepted after this deadline. The State requires that a committee be established before a grant application is submitted. The State requires that County advisory committees include:

- (i) One county commissioner;
- (ii) Two members who own or manage livestock; and
- (iii) Two members who support wolf conservation or coexistence with wolves.
- (iv) Two county business representatives

### **Additional Requirements**

The state requires that participating counties contribute an amount of money equal to 10% of the allowable expenditures necessary to implement the county program during the calendar year. Allowable expenditures are:

- (a) Establishing a county advisory committee.

(b) Establishing a procedure by which persons applying for compensation will provide sufficient evidence of actual livestock and/or working dog losses attributed to wolf depredation.

(c) Establishing a procedure by which persons applying for financial assistance for the cost of livestock management or nonlethal deterrence provides an estimate of the potential cost.

(d) Establishing compensation rates for livestock or working dog losses from death, injury or missing all of which are attributed to wolf depredation.

(e) Distributing grant program funds.

(f) Preparation of an annual report to ODA.

### **Options for Board Consideration**

1. Consider creating a committee at a later date.
2. Begin work to establish a committee so the framework is in place if a need arises. Plan to submit a grant application in the future.
3. Begin work to establish a committee with a plan to submit a grant application in 2022.

Staff seeks Board direction on the creation of a Wolf Depredation Compensation Committee.

### **BUDGET IMPACTS:**

*Grant funds were not included in the FY 2022 budget.*

### **ATTENDANCE:**

*Jamie Bowles, Asst. Wolf Biologist, ODFW  
Whitney Hale, Deputy County Administrator*