



MEASURE: HB 3374  
EXHIBIT: BB  
HOUSE REVENUE COMMITTEE  
DATE: 6/8/2011 PAGES: 2  
SUBMITTED BY: SCOTT WEST

June 8, 2011

The Honorable Phil Barnhart  
Oregon House of Representatives  
Oregon State Capitol

Dear Co-Chair Barnhart:

On behalf of the Oregon Tourism Commission (doing business as Travel Oregon), I'd like to express our support for the Oregon Wild Bird Conservation Act proposal. Birding tourism is on the rise across the globe as travelers find new ways to quench their thirst for exploration and understanding of sense of place. Travelers seek opportunities to get "up close and personal" with prehistoric creatures such as the clepto-parasitic frigatebird in the Galapagos or the ancient long-legged yellow-billed Great Blue Heron of the Pacific Northwest.

In Oregon, one and a half million people participated in birding and other types of wildlife-viewing in 2006, leaving behind approximately \$776 million dollars in food, lodging, transportation, equipment and other associated trip costs.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, 293,000 out-of-state visitors birded in Oregon, producing a net economic value of \$134 per birding day or \$243 million total benefit to Oregon's economy.

Oregon is uniquely positioned to offer birders a rich experience with our abundant wildlife across distinctive natural habitats from the Blue Mountains to the southern Oregon Coast Range. Oregon's birding trails serve as powerful organizing tools for linking wildlife watching opportunities with accurate local information on visitor amenities and experiences. Additionally, these trails have been shown to lead to a heightened awareness of the importance of wildlife habitat and natural landscapes. It is of utmost importance that we take measures to ensure sensitive wildlife habitat in Oregon is restored and protected to maintain this aspect of our visitor economy.

Travel Oregon has played an active role in the Oregon Birding Trails Working Group. Our tourism development staff aided in the development of the five existing Oregon Birding Trail routes and we host the current Oregon Birding Trails website at [www.OregonBirdingTrails.org](http://www.OregonBirdingTrails.org). Soon, content from this site will be folded into a new version of [www.TravelOregon.com](http://www.TravelOregon.com), scheduled to launch in the fall of 2011.

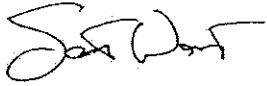
Travel Oregon firmly believes in finding ways to re-invest revenue back into tangible conservation efforts. In fact, we have recently launched the Oregon Travel Philanthropy Fund which will harness visitor donations at lodging establishments and be directed back into seven regional conservation projects, further enhancing Oregon as a destination. Instituting a modest industry-supported tax with the revenues targeted back to bird habitat conservation is thoughtful, and something we believe will have tangible, lasting impacts.

We are in support of HB 3374.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott West". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Scott West  
Chief Strategy Officer  
Oregon Tourism Commission / dba Travel Oregon