

HB 3159 - Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund



Sparks Lake, Deschutes County, Oregon;
Photo: Micah Lundstedt

What This Bill Does:

- The Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund establishes funding to conserve and recover Oregon's wildlife and habitat, which supports Oregon's thriving outdoor recreation and tourism industry.
- Establishes the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund subaccount financed by an increase to the statewide Transient Lodging Tax; this fund will be nested under the Fish and Wildlife Account.
- The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) will direct this money to implement the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategies to conserve and recover Oregon's vulnerable wildlife and habitat.

Why Legislators Should Support the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund:

- The ability to effectively implement ODFW's Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategies is crucial for the health of Oregon's diverse ecosystems and wildlife populations.
- Habitat loss and degradation, climate change, invasive species, and other natural and human-made impacts are taking a toll on Oregon's birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and bees. The Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund is a bold, proactive solution that will help at-risk species with cost-effective, collaborative conservation.
- Outdoor recreation supports \$15.6 billion in total consumer spending supporting 224,000 full and part-time jobs in Oregon and \$9.3 billion in wages.ⁱ Healthy wildlife and ecosystems support Oregon's thriving tourism industry. Specifically:
 - Oregon's hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching activities have accounted for \$1.2 billion in spending and have supported over 11,000 jobs in recent years.ⁱⁱ Additionally, these activities generated \$385 million in labor income and \$51 million in state and local taxes.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - Non-consumptive use, such as nature, wildlife, forest, and wildflower observations, accounts for \$939 million of total spending.^{iv}



American Pika is endemic to Oregon;
Photo courtesy USFS

The Proposed Funding Source - Oregon's Transient Lodging Tax (TLT)

- Oregon's TLT requires persons who rent overnight lodging to pay a state tax of 1.5%, a rate that is one of the lowest in the country; only Alaska and California are lower.^v
- The Portland metro region generates most of the statewide TLT revenue (41%).^{vi}
- Most of this tax revenue is paid by out-of-state visitors (62%), a figure which could increase as post-pandemic travel increases.^{vii}
- Under Oregon law, the TLT should be used for statewide purposes.^{viii} For example, Travel Oregon currently spends the majority of TLT on statewide and regional tourism programs.^{ix} Using the TLT to fund wildlife and habitat recovery efforts aligns with the TLT's statewide purpose.
- This bill increases the state TLT to 3.00% generating approximately \$60 million per year;^{xi} half of the TLT revenue would remain allocated to Travel Oregon, and the other half would be used to implement ODFW's Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategies.
- An Oregon statewide TLT rate of 3.00% would still be one of the lowest in the country; at that rate, only Colorado, Alaska, and California would be lower.^{xii}

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- i** Earth Economics, *Economic Analysis Of Outdoor Recreation in Oregon* (2019), https://issuu.com/traveloregon2019/docs/economicanalysisofoutdoorrecreationinoregon_otc-ea (Page 1).
- ii** Oregon Dep't of Fish & Wildlife, *Factsheet-Economic Impact OR Counties-Earth Economics* (2019), <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/docs/Factsheet-Economic%20Impact%20OR%20Counties-Earth%20Economics%202019.pdf>.
- iii** Oregon Dep't of Fish & Wildlife, *Factsheet-Economic Impact OR Counties-Earth Economics* (2019), <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/docs/Factsheet-Economic%20Impact%20OR%20Counties-Earth%20Economics%202019.pdf>.
- iv** Earth Economics, *Economic Analysis Of Outdoor Recreation in Oregon* (2019), https://issuu.com/traveloregon2019/docs/economicanalysisofoutdoorrecreationinoregon_otc-ea (Page 32).
- v** Oregon Revised Statutes 320.305, "Rate and Computation of Tax" https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_320.305;
Oregon Revised Statutes 320.300 "ORS 320.300 Definitions for ORS 320.300 to 320.365" https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_320.300;
National Conference of State Legislatures, *State Lodging Taxes*. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-lodging-taxes.aspx#6>.
- vi** Travel Oregon, *The Economic Impact of Travel* (May 2022), https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/OR_2021_Final.pdf (Page 24);
Oregon Dep't of Revenue, *Oregon's State Lodging Tax, Program Description and Characteristics of Taxpayers: Calendar Years 2009-2018* (April 2019), https://www.oregon.gov/dor/programs/gov-research/Documents/state-lodging-report_604-005.pdf (Table 2.2) (Page 16).
- vii** Travel Oregon, *The Economic Impact of Travel*, (May 2022), https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/OR_2021_Final.pdf (Page 24).
- viii** House Bill 2267 (2003), https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/archivebills/2003_EHB2267.pdf;
Oregon Revised Statutes 284.131 "Commission account," https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_284.131.
- ix** Travel Oregon, *Oregon Tourism Commission*, <https://industry.traveloregon.com/about/oregon-tourism-commission/>.
- x** See Oregon Department of Revenue, *Oregon's State Lodging Tax, Program Description and Characteristics of Taxpayers: Calendar Years 2009-2018* (April 2019), https://www.oregon.gov/dor/programs/gov-research/Documents/state-lodging-report_604-005.pdf (Table 1.2) (Page 12). Funding estimate derived from a June 2022 ODFW estimate.
- xi** National Conference of State Legislatures, *State Lodging Taxes* <https://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-lodging-taxes.aspx#6>.