



TRYON CREEK WATERSHED COUNCIL

February 4, 2026

Dear Chair Nathanson and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

On behalf of the Tryon Creek Watershed Council, we write in strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25%. This is a critical and forward-looking investment in Oregon's fish, wildlife, and natural landscapes that directly benefit watersheds, communities, and the state's outdoor economy.

The funding generated through HB 4134-1 would establish a dedicated, long-term funding source for a broad range of conservation programs that protect biodiversity and strengthen Oregon's natural infrastructure. These funds would support key organizations including the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund, ODFW's State Wildlife Action Plan, Wildlife Connectivity Program, Wildlife Stewardship Program, invasive species response, wolf depredation compensation and financial assistance, and anti-poaching efforts led by the Department of Justice and Oregon State Police. Together, these programs play a vital role in conserving habitats, maintaining ecosystem balance, and ensuring responsible wildlife management across the state.

Oregon's rivers, forests, and wildlife are central to the state's identity and economy. Outdoor recreation and tourism generate approximately \$8 billion annually in Oregon, drawing visitors who come to experience thriving rivers, abundant wildlife, and intact natural landscapes. By reinvesting a small portion of tourism revenue into conservation programs that protect these resources, HB 4134-1 represents a practical approach that benefits both residents and visitors. It is of note that Oregon's tourism tax would remain the third lowest in the country, even with this increase.

As a watershed council, we see firsthand how healthy watersheds depend on biodiversity, intact habitats, and connected landscapes. Therefore, investments in wildlife connectivity, invasive species control, and habitat stewardship directly improve watershed health, increase climate resilience, and reduce long-term restoration costs. Again, we know that visitors come to Oregon to experience healthy watersheds and we must protect and improve these natural resources.

For these reasons, the Tryon Creek Watershed Council strongly urges you to support HB 4134-1. This investment in wildlife and habitat represents a strategic commitment to the species and landscapes that define Oregon's natural beauty and fuel our tourism economy, enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership on behalf of Oregon's natural resources.

Sincerely,

Alexis Barton Castro
Executive Director, Tryon Creek Watershed Council