

Submitter: Heather Birdsong
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Chair Nathanson and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

My name is Heather Birdsong and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

The majority of my fellow Oregonians strongly support securing long-term dedicated funding for wildlife and habitats protection. This is especially vital as federal support for such protections is disappearing and longstanding policies for stewardship and protection are dismantled (to the detriment of us all, especially future generations). We must look to our own community.

The funding will not only help wildlife and habitats, which are essential to the beauty and livability of our state, but also support local communities and businesses that rely on tourism dollars. Oregon's robust outdoor tourism economy supports nearly 200,000 jobs and brings in \$16 billion in consumer spending. Visiting to hike through forests and kayak down rivers is what first brought me here from the southwest, and it's why I decided to make Oregon my home 21 years ago.

Investing in these resources now will generate more economic opportunities for Oregon's communities in the future. We cannot have a thriving tourism economy without healthy and abundant habitats that support our fish and wildlife and provide meaningful, enriching recreation for Oregonians and tourists alike. This legislation further ensures we have resources for wildfire mitigation and maintenance—which, unfortunately, is becoming an ever greater concern under the looming reality of climate change.

This is a rare moment when conservationists, ranchers, and hunters are in agreement about a course of action, which speaks to the necessity of this legislation. Oregon has always highly valued our robust and gorgeous wildernesses and its creatures. We should hold tight to that history.

Please support "1.25% for Wildlife" by passing HB 4134 today.