

Submitter:

Jason OBrien

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4134

Dear Chair Nathanson and Committee members,

I am writing in strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment, which would increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% to provide much-needed, dedicated funding for the recovery of Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats. A clear majority of Oregonians support securing long-term, dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable species and ecosystems, and I am one of those Oregonians.

Here's a bit of history: Sport hunting and fishing communities have, for decades, relied on these industries to raise Federal tax revenue to support the management, protection, and habitat acquisition of hunted and fished species. Since 1937 the Pittman-Robertson Act assesses an excise tax of 10-11% on the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and since 1950 the Dingell-Johnson Act assesses an excise tax of 10% on the sale of sport fishing equipment, pleasure boats, and the portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small engines and motorboats. In FY2025, the revenue from each Act generated 1.3 billion dollars (which is apportioned to each state, commonwealth and territory based on formulas considering land and water area and the number of paid hunting and fishing license holders. Oregon received nearly 31 million dollars of this total. Revenue sources: <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/fy-25-sfr-final-apportionment-table.pdf> and <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/fy-25-wr-final-apportionment-table.pdf>.

However, in spite of how successful these Federal programs have been for generating revenue for fish and wildlife, the number of hunters and anglers has steadily declined over the decades as a percentage of the U.S. population. Over the same period of decades, the proportion of the U.S. population watching, photographing, and seeking out wildlife and wild lands has skyrocketed. And yet, the vast majority of our wildlife and fish species (those that aren't hunted or fished) do not have dedicated funding for their management. But we can do something about that right here in Oregon with HB 4134.

As a professional with a degree in wildlife ecology and current educator of Oregon's natural history, I, like many Oregonians, value these resources not only for what they offer us today, but for what they represent for future generations, especially as we face mounting challenges from human caused climate change. Oregon's landscapes and wildlife are at the heart of what makes this state extraordinary, and if we fail to do our part now to conserve and manage our coastal, prairie, forest, montane, and high

desert ecosystems for the species that depend on them, we risk losing more than just rare and at risk wildlife and fish species. We risk losing out on the financial benefits that our natural heritage provides.

HB 4134 represents a thoughtful and forward-looking solution. By investing in conservation, this bill also strengthens Oregon's outdoor recreation and tourism economy, which accounts for 2.6% of the state's GDP, supports 192,000 jobs, and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending. Protecting the natural resources that draw visitors to Oregon is a smart economic investment in our communities. A healthy tourism economy depends on healthy fish, wildlife, habitats, and outdoor spaces. HB 4134 would help ensure Oregon can sustain both.

At a time when federal protections and funding for conservation are being reduced, this legislation gives Oregon the opportunity to lead by example and reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding our natural heritage. This is a rare opportunity to make a lasting investment in Oregon's biodiversity and natural legacy.

I respectfully urge you to support and pass HB 4134 with the -1 amendment this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Jason O'Brien