

Subject: Strong Support for HB 4134 to Invest in Oregon's Wildlife and Natural Legacy

Dear Members of the Legislature,

My name is Ian Sharpe, and I live in Bend, Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 4134 with the amendment number one, which would increase the state lodging tax by 1.25 percent to provide dedicated, long term funding to help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

Oregon's identity is inseparable from its natural legacy. Our native fish and wildlife, along with our diverse landscapes ranging from forests and rivers to the high desert and sagebrush steppe, are central to what makes this state special. These places shape why people choose to live here, why visitors travel from around the world to experience Oregon, and why so many of us spend our free time outdoors connecting with the land.

As an Operation Iraqi Freedom Air Force veteran, the outdoors has played a deeply personal role in my life. After returning home from deployment, I struggled with the invisible weight that many veterans carry. Time in nature became a quiet but powerful form of healing for me. Long runs on forest trails, time spent near rivers, and moments of solitude in wide open landscapes helped me regain a sense of balance, perspective, and purpose. Oregon's natural places were not just scenic backdrops. They were essential to my recovery and well being. Protecting these lands and the wildlife that depend on them is something I care about deeply, not just in principle but through lived experience.

Oregonians value wildlife and want to see it thrive. We are proud of our natural heritage and care deeply about passing it on in a healthy state to future generations. A strong majority of Oregonians support dedicated funding to recover vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, and HB 4134 directly reflects those shared values.

This bill would provide long term, reliable funding to recover Oregon's most at risk species and habitats. It would support sagebrush ecosystems, connected wildlife corridors, and resilient landscapes that sustain biodiversity across the state. These investments are essential if we are serious about preventing further declines and reducing the need for more costly emergency measures in the future.

Healthy wildlife and habitats are also fundamental to Oregon's economy. Our outdoor recreation and tourism economy depends on clean water, healthy lands, and thriving ecosystems. Outdoor recreation contributes 2.6 percent of Oregon's gross domestic product, supports 192,000 jobs, and generates sixteen billion dollars in consumer spending. We cannot have a strong tourism economy without healthy ecosystems. Conservation is not separate from economic vitality. It is foundational to it.

State leadership is especially important right now. As federal funding and protections for wildlife and habitats are reduced, Oregon has an opportunity and a responsibility to step forward. By

investing in our natural legacy now, we can protect what makes Oregon unique while supporting local communities and long term economic resilience.

Passing HB 4134 would make Oregon a national leader. It would demonstrate how a state can proactively protect biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, support wildlife stewardship, and sustain healthy ecosystems for generations to come.

For me, this bill is about honoring the places that helped me heal and ensuring they remain healthy and accessible for others who may one day rely on them in the same way. I urge you to support HB 4134 with the amendment number one and invest in the future of Oregon's wildlife, habitats, and people.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Oregon.

Sincerely,
Ian P. Sharpe