

Submitter: Michael Allen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Dear Oregon Legislature,

I live in NE Portland, House District 45, Senate District 23, and I'm writing in support of HB 3134 to levy an additional 1.25% tax on transient lodging in the state, to be dedicated to recovering Oregon's wildlife and habitat.

As an avid hiker, forager, angler, and occasional hunter, my way of life is deeply invested in Oregon's natural landscapes and the flora and fauna that give them meaning. As a frequent volunteer in habitat restoration and wildlife and plant monitoring projects (ONDA, FWS, NPSO), I am also acutely aware of the challenges facing our natural abundance.

We all have an impact, not just in our domestic consumption, but in our every excursion into the wilder Out There. Hikers spook animals and force them to move more often, expending valuable calories, putting prey animals back into the view of predators. We carry seeds of invasive species on our boots and clothing into previously undisturbed areas. Just look at the increasingly robust populations of shiny geranium and herb-Robert along Columbia Gorge trails moving deeper into the forest every year. Unfortunately some proportion of hikers will always tread off-trail, resulting in denuding the understory and trail erosion of popular hikes like Saddle Mountain. Many of our tidal pools have suffered a visible loss of abundance and diversity due to increased human interest in wading and exploring them.

The decline of Central Oregon mule deer populations coincided with the explosion of high-desert resorts and golf courses which have been erected in the path of their traditional winter forage grounds. Heavier traffic throughout the rural areas of the state leads to more wildlife collisions. Up to ten percent of all caught and released trout do not survive.

In short, the sheer quantity of human presence in wild animal and plant habitat is detrimental to the habitat. Through Travel Oregon, we explicitly encourage people to visit the state for our natural beauty and wildlife, which inevitably takes a toll on that very beauty and life.

Compared to other states, Oregon takes a very small percentage of a tourist's dollar for our collective benefit, since we have no sales tax and the current transient lodging tax is relatively low. If a tourist to Oregon today has the opportunity to witness a herd of mule deer on a high desert meadow, or to hook into a hefty rainbow trout on one of

our pristine rivers, or experiences the magical beauty of an intact mountain conifer forest, I would think they should be happy to help ensure that such experiences remain for the next time, and for the next generation.

The only ethical or prudent vote is yea.

Sincerely,
Mike Allen