

Submitter: JP Marchetti-Mendez
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 JP Marchetti-Mendez, and 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.

As an Oregonian who cares deeply about wildlife conservation, I see every day how committed people across this state are to protecting and restoring the ecosystems that support our native species. Our individual efforts to create habitat and support wildlife demonstrate that Oregonians value our natural heritage. But individual action alone is not enough. We need bold, systemic support to address the scale of biodiversity loss we face.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife currently receives no dedicated state funding for species and habitat conservation. This is unconscionable given the crisis our wildlife faces. HB 4134 would provide approximately \$25 million annually for Oregon's most imperiled species and habitats, create a wildlife stewardship program to help people coexist with wildlife, bolster anti-poaching and invasive species management, and support wildfire prevention. These investments are essential.

Securing long-term, dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat protection is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians for good reason. We cannot have a thriving tourism economy without healthy and abundant fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. Oregon's outdoor tourism economy supports nearly 200,000 jobs and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending. Investing in these resources now will continue to generate economic opportunities for Oregon's communities in the future.

At a time when the federal government is slashing funding and dismantling policies that protect our vulnerable fish and wildlife and their habitats, Oregon has a chance to set an example and protect our natural heritage. This is our opportunity to lead, not follow. We cannot afford to wait another generation to act.

In the last session, this bill came heartbreakingly close to passing before falling victim to political tactics. Let's finish what we started and show that Oregon values its millennial natural heritage and is willing to invest in it.

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

Thank you,

JP Marchetti-Mendez