

Submitter: Jeff Heilman

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Dear Chair Nathanson and House Committee on Revenue members:

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.

In Oregon, our identity is closely tied to the natural wonders of our state and our rich array of wildlife, from whales and sea stars on the coast, to rivers rich with salmon and steelhead, to alpine valleys that are home to bears, marmots, and marten, to high desert shrub steppe where sage-grouse, mule deer, and antelope live.

Oregonians' love for the outdoors is well-known statewide and nationwide and securing long-term dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians.

I also want to urge you to support this landmark bill, which would dedicate long-term funding to recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats, because this is critical for our state's tourism economy, which supports 192,000 jobs and brings in \$16 billion in consumer spending.

Our thriving outdoor tourism economy would suffer without healthy and abundant fish and wildlife populations. Investing in wildlife and habitat conservation projects will generate more economic opportunities for Oregon's communities now, and well in the future. As a former owner of a licensed short term vacation rental in central Oregon, I was surprised at how low the state tourism tax was on rentals, and felt that Oregon was missing out on a potential golden opportunity to increase funding for some critically underfunded program related to tourism. That's why I was delighted to see HB 4134. This is the golden opportunity and now is the time to make it happen.

As the federal government is dismantling the policies that protect our vulnerable fish and wildlife and their habitats and slashing funding sources, Oregon can set a better example and protect our natural heritage.

This bill is your once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect the rich biodiversity that makes Oregon an incredible place to live and to visit.

Please pass HB 4134 -1 this legislative session. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jeff Heilman