

Submitter: Rachel Hopkins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

I urgently and enthusiastically support this bill, for many reasons. It supports and protects wildlife and human health, prevents endangered species conflicts and strengthens the outdoor and tourism economy, all without raising taxes for residents. What's not to support? The time has long since arrived to stop pretending as if protecting ecosystems and the natural world is simply a nice thing to do, but not essential. No--ecological integrity and the health of this earth, our only home, are the foundation of all life on earth, including of course, human life. We cannot afford to continue with business as usual, and this bill would be a historic move in the right direction. I could enumerate the many reasons why wildlife and habitats of Oregon are important to me, but it all comes back the fact that they are not just important, but they are everything to me. I live out in central Oregon, a sometimes overlooked habitat compared to the lush temperate rainforest of the valley. Although I love the valley, I must admit there is something enchanting about the Oregon desert. It is sometimes an acquired taste, a love that takes time to blossom. For me, it is my muse, my love, my life force. It is the land of my heart and it is everything to me. To illustrate my feelings further, here is a short poem I wrote inspired by the old growth juniper trees here which have become my greatest teachers in this land. The land and all its beings are a balm and a source of inspiration, vitality, joy, connection, and much more.

Woman of the Desert

The old and twisted juniper breaks against the sky
Fallen, ruined, trunk split in half, a gaping emptiness
In center, the wary moon peaks out the other side, please—
Teach me how to live with a hole through your chest
How to turn your brokenness into a rare work of art
Mine's spitting sharp splinters of shame
An explosion of hollow pain
Carved out behind my ribcage
Juniper Mother
How do you weather this world
With all the pain and violence and soul-crushing cruelty
I want it all to be different, better, more beautiful
I want to save everyone
I fail in these wants every day
A small creature digging a burrow to darkness
In my slough of despond

My mucky wetland of lament
Maybe you could stand to twist me from my sorrow
Your roots go deep—
Is this how I must grow myself?
Sunshine-reaching, splintering with rare splendor,
Steadfast in gnarled limb, irrefutably,
Here.