



Testimony in Support of House Bill 4134 (1.25% for Wildlife Bill)

Submitted to the House Committee on Revenue

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Chair Nathanson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jane Bacchieri, and I am the Executive Director of the Elakha Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring sea otters to Oregon's coastal waters. The Elakha Alliance was founded by tribal leaders, conservationists, and community advocates with a shared vision of enhancing the resilience of Oregon's marine ecosystems and coastal communities through the reintroduction of sea otters—a keystone species that has been absent from our shores for over a century.

On behalf of the Elakha Alliance, I am pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 4134, also known as the 1.25% for Wildlife bill, with the -1 amendment. This legislation represents a critical opportunity to secure dedicated, sustainable funding for wildlife conservation in Oregon by modestly increasing the statewide transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.75%. The additional revenue—estimated at approximately \$27 million annually—would be directed to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to implement the state's Wildlife Action Plan, protect imperiled species, restore habitats, and address the growing threats posed by climate change, habitat loss, and biodiversity decline.

Sea otters, or "elakha" in the Chinook trade language, were once abundant along Oregon's coast, but were hunted to local extinction by the early 1900s. As a keystone species, sea otters play an indispensable role in maintaining healthy kelp forests, which in turn support diverse marine life, protect against coastal erosion, and sequester carbon. Their absence has contributed to ecosystem imbalances, including the proliferation of sea urchins that devastate kelp beds, leading to reduced biodiversity and weakened coastal resilience.

Restoring sea otters is not just an environmental imperative; it is essential for the economic and cultural well-being of Oregon's coastal communities, which rely on thriving fisheries, tourism, and traditional tribal practices. Unfortunately, ODFW's current budget allocates only a fraction—about 2.75%—to proactive conservation efforts for at-risk species like sea otters. HB 4134 would address this shortfall by providing reliable funding for initiatives such as habitat restoration, species recovery plans, and collaborative reintroduction programs.

For the Elakha Alliance, this bill aligns directly with our mission: it would enable partnerships with ODFW, tribes, and stakeholders to advance sea otter feasibility studies, translocation efforts, and long-term monitoring.

The lodging tax increase targets visitors who enjoy Oregon's natural beauty, ensuring that those who benefit from our wild places contribute to their conservation. Similar funding mechanisms have proven successful in other states, demonstrating that modest investments yield significant returns in biodiversity, economic stability, and community resilience.

The Elakha Alliance urges the committee to pass HB 4134 with the -1 amendment without delay. Oregon's wildlife cannot wait—nearly 300 species are at risk, and the time to act is now. We stand ready to collaborate and provide any additional information or expertise to support this vital legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Bacchieri".

Jane Bacchieri
Executive Director
Elakha Alliance
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