

Submitter: Daniel Rubado
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 Dan Rubado and I'm a wildlife biologist living in Portland, Oregon. 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. Oregon is an incredibly special place, and our state's identity is closely tied to its rich natural heritage, including native fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. Oregonians' love for the outdoors is known throughout the country. Oregonians like me are proud of our natural heritage and want to see it thrive for future generations. However, our current funding for wildlife conservation is very limited and tenuous, given the scope of work that needs to be done to restore our natural areas and threatened wildlife populations. The funding we have now is tied to declining hunting and fishing fees or relies on federal agencies. This is insufficient and it's not a sustainable way to fund conservation in Oregon into the future. We need a new mechanism to fund fish and wildlife conservation programs and habitat restoration work. This bill provides such a mechanism.

Securing long-term dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians. I urge you to support this landmark bill, which would dedicate long-term funding to recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats - all of which are critical for our state's tourism economy. Oregon's robust outdoor tourism economy - 2.6% of the state's GDP - supports 192,000 jobs and brings in \$16 billion in consumer spending. Investing in these resources now will continue to generate more economic opportunities for Oregon's communities in the future.

We cannot have a thriving tourism economy without healthy and abundant fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. This legislation would ensure we have both. At a time when the federal government is slashing funds 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. Doing so would make Oregon a national leader.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect our natural legacy and rich biodiversity, which make this state so special. Please pass HB 4134 -1 this legislative session!