

I am writing to urge your support for 1.25% for Wildlife - legislation that would raise Oregon's statewide Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) from 1.5% to 2.75% and dedicate the additional revenue to support critical wildlife and habitat recovery work across the state.

Oregon's wildlife and the habitats they depend on are facing a crisis. Nearly 300 species are at elevated risk of extinction and multiple key habitats are in decline. Without sustainable, long-term funding, these species, their habitats, and the ecosystems they create could be lost forever. Work to reverse the decline of these species and their habitats has never been adequately funded. It is time to--once and for all--secure such funding.

I write to you with professional experience in these matters. Among other things, I:

- Headed up the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Nongame (later Wildlife Diversity) Program in the 1990's, and coordinated the development of Oregon's first Wildlife Diversity Plan (which later "morphed" into the State's Conservation Strategy and later the State Wildlife Action Plan)
- Was appointed by Governor Kate Brown to serve on the Legislative Task Force on Funding for Fish, Wildlife and Related Outdoor Recreation and Education

Now retired, I am still active in protecting Oregon's amazing wildlife, and reversing the decline of species and habitats at risk. I am currently Vice President of a nonprofit organization--the Elakha Alliance--which is dedicated to bringing sea otters back to the Oregon Coast (where they have been absent for over 100 years). Reintroducing sea otters, (a keystone species), is critical to restoring kelp forests and the entire marine ecosystem.

This will not be possible without adequate funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and its partners.

The 1.25% for Wildlife proposal would:

Generate reliable, dedicated funding for implementation of Oregon's State Wildlife Action Plan and related recovery efforts. It would support habitat restoration, species recovery, and community stewardship programs both on the coast and statewide.

The 1.25 % for Wildlife proposal would still leave Oregon with one of the lowest statewide tourism taxes in the country, even after the increase. This funding mechanism is fair and balanced. The majority of the cost will be borne by out-of-state visitors who enjoy Oregon's world-class outdoor experiences - from salmon fishing and whale watching to birding and hiking.

This is not only an environmental imperative; it is also an investment in rural economies. By safeguarding the natural heritage that draws people to live in and visit Oregon, we strengthen local communities statewide. A modest increase in the lodging tax is a practical, responsible way to ensure Oregon's investment in its natural resources meets the scale of today's challenges, and those ahead.

Please make 1.25% for Wildlife a priority for passage in the 2026 session.