

Submitter: Janelle Wicks
On Behalf Of: Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Dear Chair Nathanson and House Committee on Revenue members:

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (FOMR), a 501-(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote conservation and appreciation of natural (including fish and wildlife) and cultural resources at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge through education, outreach, advocacy, and on-the-ground stewardship.

FOMR strongly supports 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 rich in fish and wildlife diversity, however, adequate funding to support these species has long been lacking. For example, Oregon's non-game program has been operating on a very limited and inadequate budget for years.

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 and FOMR's extensive membership (over 1500 members).

We 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 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,

Janelle Wicks, Executive Director
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
MalheurFriends.org