

Submitter: Jack Halsey
On Behalf Of: Oswego Lake Watershed Council
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Oswego Lake Watershed Council writes in support of long-term, dedicated funding to prevent the decline of Oregon's imperiled fish, wildlife, and habitats, and reduce wildfire risk on Oregon's landscape. HB 4134 - "1.25% for Wildlife?" - which secures dedicated, sustainable funding for Oregon's imperiled wildlife, lands and waters by increasing the state transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.75% (an increase of 1.25%). Oregon's economy is heavily dependent on our natural landscapes, native wildlife, and healthy waters; however, Oregon is currently failing to invest meaningful resources in the recovery of at-risk species and habitats, many of which are significant drivers of tourism and critical to the state's economy. HB 4134 represents a wise investment in not only our present and future natural resources, but also in the reason so many visitors travel to Oregon.

Oregon is fortunate to have a diverse and bountiful array of flora and fauna, and habitats that support them, which created a robust outdoor recreation economy that draws millions of visitors to Oregon each year. This includes Oregonians and millions of non-Oregonians who visit Oregon to enjoy these opportunities and support our robust tourism industry. A 2023 analysis revealed that Oregon's outdoor recreation industry accounted for 2.6% of the state's GDP, higher than the national average. Additionally, data from 2022 shows that Oregon's outdoor economy contributes to \$16 billion in consumer spending and supports 192,000 jobs.

Many of Oregon's species and habitats face increasing challenges, putting their future at risk and threatening Oregon's tourism and recreation economy. At the request of Congress, Oregon developed the Oregon Conservation Strategy (now known as the State Wildlife Action Plan or SWAP) in 2005 to assess the health of Oregon's fish, wildlife, and habitat and create a roadmap of conservation actions needed to sustain them. The SWAP is updated every ten years, and as of 2025, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has identified at least 321 species of greatest conservation need (a significant increase from 294 in the last iteration) and 11 types of native habitats needing proactive restoration actions.

Without direct and targeted interventions, these species and habitats will continue their downward spiral of decline and possible extinction. This will also negatively impact the growth trajectory of Oregon's tourism and outdoor recreation industry. Without sufficient and consistent funding from the state, Oregon's most vulnerable species, habitats and communities remain at risk. This threatens Oregon's natural legacy, its economy and the thousands of Oregonians whose livelihoods depend on the outdoor recreation industry. Not addressing this issue also goes against Oregonians' expectations, as, per a 2025 poll, 71% of Oregonians responded that they believe protecting the biodiversity of Oregon should be a priority of state and national politicians.

HB 4134 is a proactive solution that will directly help at-risk species, vulnerable habitats and communities that depend on them. This bill also secures dedicated funding for Oregon's invasive species, wildfire risk reduction for communities with co-benefits for wildlife, wildlife stewardship, wolf depredation and compensation, anti-poaching and wildlife connectivity programs. At a time when federal actions have impacted programs that build resiliency of our at-risk wildlife, lands and waters by eliminating staff capacity and on-the-ground resources, HB 4134 is an opportunity for Oregon to step up boldly and fulfill its responsibility to protect our most vulnerable natural communities. This increase to Oregon's state transient lodging tax would provide a steady, sustainable source of funds to ODFW to recover Oregon's most imperiled species and habitat and enhance biodiversity – all while making Oregon a more attractive place for residents and visitors.

Sincerely,

Jack Halsey, Executive Director