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Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 25, 2026

Re: HB 4134 (Increases the state transient lodging tax)

Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane and Members of the Committee,

My name is Colin Reynolds. I am the Senior Advisor for Defenders of Wildlife's ("Defenders") Northwest Field Conservation Program. Defenders is a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities, with over 40,000 members and supporters in Oregon. On behalf of Defenders, I am submitting the following comments in support of HB 4134. The bill would raise the state transient lodging tax by 1.25%, from 1.5% to 2.75%, and establish dedicated and sustained funding for several programs benefiting Oregon's natural resources, rural and tourism economies, and our overall quality of life. Defenders enthusiastically supports HB 4134 because it would greatly benefit Oregon's environment, economy and people.

How HB 4134 Would Benefit Oregon's Environment

HB 4134 would greatly benefit Oregon's environment by establishing dedicated and sustained funding to conserve and recover Oregon's imperiled wildlife and habitats. Habitat loss and degradation, climate change, invasive species, and other natural and human-made impacts are taking a toll on Oregon's birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and bees.ⁱ Using one metric to indicate the plight of Oregon's environment, in 2025, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife ("ODFW") identified over 300 species in the state as being at an elevated risk of extinction, a jump of 26 from 2016.ⁱⁱ Unfortunately, ODFW has little money to implement its State Wildlife Action Planⁱⁱⁱ ("SWAP") – Oregon's plan to conserve fish and wildlife – raising the prospect that more species will be added to ODFW's impairment list in the future, and those species on this list will move closer to extinction.

HB 4134 would generate meaningful funding for ODFW to implement its SWAP and recover these imperiled species,¹ empowering the agency to meet its mission to "protect and

¹ When receiving sustained and adequate funding, ODFW has a track record of successfully recovering wildlife populations. See e.g., Zach Urness, *Why ranchers, enviros support Oregon hotel tax for wildlife programs*, SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL (Jan. 31, 2026), <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/tech/science/environment/2026/01/31/oregon-hotel-tax-increase-wildlife-programs/88418510007/?gnt-cfr=1&gca-cat=p&gca-uir=true&gca->

enhance Oregon’s fish and wildlife.”^{iv} SWAPs are the blueprint for proactively conserving species before they become federally listed as threatened or endangered. They guide partnerships and actions that have helped species avoid federal listing by addressing threats early and collaboratively, saving millions in costs otherwise spent on ESA listing assessments, habitat designations, and regulatory compliance.^v

HB 4134 would also benefit Oregon’s environment by funding a number of existing state programs that address invasive species, improve wildlife connectivity, help support species coexistence, and support wildlife rehabilitation facilities. Without this funding, the Wolf Compensation and Conflict Prevention Grant Program will not be able to address the needs of rural, ranching communities. Overall, HB 4134 represents a significant investment in Oregon’s natural legacy and rural communities, benefiting Oregon’s iconic fish, wildlife, and habitat and ensuring adequate support for wildlife conflict reduction.

How HB 4134 Would Benefit Oregon’s Economy

HB 4134 would greatly benefit Oregon’s economy by reinvesting in our natural resources, one of the major draws for out-of-state tourists. The health of the environment is critical to Oregon’s economy. According to a 2024 report commissioned by Travel Oregon, the Oregon Office of Outdoor Recreation and ODFW, Oregon’s outdoor recreation generated \$16 billion in consumer spending and 192,000 full and part-time jobs.^{vi} These benefits are felt throughout the state. For example, Coos, Lane, and Lincoln counties, which have the highest percentage of the labor force employed by outdoor recreation spending and lead the state in consumer spending by county.^{vii} Additionally, many place-based sectors, such as local restaurants, retailers, and lodging establishments, depend directly on Oregon’s outdoor amenities and environmental reputation.²

Unfortunately, the prospect of a deteriorating environment would greatly affect Oregon’s economy. Take, for example, the Klamath Winter Wings Festival, the nation’s oldest birding festival that draws visitors from around the world to Southern Oregon in February of each year, boosting the region during its shoulder season.^{viii} In 2024, organizers had to cancel the festival due to the lack of birds due to a degradation in the area’s habitat.^{ix} Oregon’s tourism industry also invites visitors to come to the Oregon Coast to view the gray whale and tufted puffin,^x species both on Oregon’s impairment list and who face the prospect of

[epti=z117633p001450c001450v117633d--36--b--36--&gca-ft=219&gca-ds=sophi](https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/291988). (“Oregon has the recipe to recover non-game wildlife populations in the same way big-game animals have increased from near extinction in the early 1900s to stable populations today. [ODFW Director Colbert] mentioned elk, bighorn sheep and rocky mountain goat as examples of animals that made major rebounds during the last century.”); *Dedicated funding can make a difference*; The Biodiversity Crisis and Oregon’s Wildlife Action Plan, OREGON DEP’T OF FISH & WILDLIFE (Feb. 24, 2025), <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/291988>.

² Ken Cousins, Trygve Madsen, & Johnny Mojica, *Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Oregon*, EARTH ECONOMICS 16 (2021), https://issuu.com/traveloregon2019/docs/economicanalysisofoutdoorrecreationinoregon_otc-ea. (“These results clearly demonstrate how jobs directly supported by outdoor recreation have immense ripple effects throughout Oregon’s economy”).

further decline without adequate restoration.^{xi} With a degrading environment, visitors may decide to visit other states instead, delivering a substantial blow to Oregon's economy as a whole and many towns and regions that rely on visitors throughout the year to support their local restaurants, retailers, and lodging establishments.

HB 4134 would establish dedicated, sustained funding for environmental programs, representing a strategic investment that will yield economic and ecological returns for years to come. This funding would also function as a business-retention strategy by supporting these outdoor recreation industries and the restaurants, retailers, and lodging establishments that depend on tourism.^{xii} The Oregon Conservation Corps portion of this bill would also support Oregon's workforce development. Overall, HB 4134 represents a significant investment in Oregon's economy, benefiting the state's outdoor recreation economy and the many restaurants, retailers, and lodging establishments that depend on visitors traveling to the state.

How HB 4134 Would Benefit Oregon's People

Beyond the environmental and economic benefits, HB 4134 would benefit the citizens of Oregon by showing that state government can work well when all sides join together in support of a common cause. For too long, Oregon has had a reputation of a state divided along urban-rural lines, of a state that favors certain regions and geographies, and of a state that cannot come together to solve big problems.

HB 4134 would cast a blow against that reputation. This bill has bipartisan legislative support. This bill is supported by legislators from all corners of the state. This bill has the backing of over 100 businesses from across the state. This bill has the support of over 70 Oregon organizations representing a broad and diverse range of interests. The reason why this bill has this much backing is that its supporters believe it will do amazing things for the state and its economy and serve as a pioneering model that other states will look to across the country.

Conclusion

HB 4134 is a landmark bill that would benefit Oregon's environment, economy and people. Defenders enthusiastically supports HB 4134 and recommends the Oregon Legislature do the same.

Sincerely,



Colin Reynolds

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Defenders of Wildlife

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- ⁱ See *State Wildlife Action Plan: Overview*, OREGON DEP'T OF FISH & WILDLIFE 8 (2026), https://dfw.state.or.us/SWAP-Revision/docs/ORSWAP_Overview.pdf.
- ⁱⁱ *State Wildlife Action Plan: Species of Greatest Conservation Need*, OREGON DEP'T OF FISH & WILDLIFE 2 (2026), https://dfw.state.or.us/SWAP-Revision/docs/ORSWAP_Species.pdf; *Oregon Conservation Strategy: Strategy Species*, OREGON DEP'T OF FISH & WILDLIFE 1 (2016), <https://oregonconservationstrategy.org/media/6-Strategy-Species-12.30.16.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Amal Ahmed, *Would you pay 1% more for wildlife?*, HIGH COUNTRY NEWS (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://www.hcn.org/articles/would-you-pay-1-more-for-wildlife>.
- ^{iv} *Mission, Principles and Priorities*, OREGON DEP'T OF FISH & WILDLIFE, <https://dfw.state.or.us/agency/mission.asp>.
- ^v Testimony of Matthew J. Strickler, Deputy Assistant Sec'y for Fish & Wildlife & Parks, U.S. Dep't of the Interior, Before the H. Comm. on Nat. Res., Subcomm. on Water, Wildlife, & Fisheries on H.R. 7408, America's Wildlife Habitat Conservation Act (Mar. 6, 2024). [H.R. 7408 | U.S. Department of the Interior](https://www.house.gov/committees/water-wildlife-and-fisheries/hearings/2024/03-06-2024)
- ^{vi} Erin Mackey & Ken Cousins, *Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Oregon: 2022 Update*, EARTH ECONOMICS 1 (2024), <https://www.oregon.gov/oprd/PRP/Documents/2024.07.17%20Economic%20analysis%20of%20outdoor%20recreation%20in%20OR%20-%202022%20update.pdf>.
- ^{vii} *Id.* at 19.
- ^{viii} Lee Juillerat, *Four-decade-old Winter Wings birding festival canceled for 2024*, ROGUE VALLEY TIMES (Jan. 5, 2024), <https://rv-times.com/2024/01/05/four-decade-old-winter-wings-birding-festival-canceled-for-2024/>.
- ^{ix} *Id.*
- ^x Kerry Newberry, *The Hidden Lives of Whales*, TRAVEL OREGON (Feb. 24, 2016), <https://traveloregon.com/things-to-do/trip-ideas/favorite-trips/the-hidden-lives-of-whales/>; *Haystack Rock*, TRAVEL OREGON, <https://traveloregon.com/things-to-do/destinations/parks-forests-wildlife-areas/haystack-rock/>.
- ^{xi} *State Wildlife Action Plan: Species of Greatest Conservation Need*, OREGON DEP'T OF FISH & WILDLIFE 4 (2026), https://dfw.state.or.us/SWAP-Revision/docs/ORSWAP_Species.pdf
- ^{xii} Ben Williamson & Mark Haggerty, *Evidence to support Oregon's HB 2977*, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES RESEARCH AND CONSULTING (April 2025), <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/204423>. *Id.* at 7 (“Place-based investments create good places to live and attractive business environments.”); *Id.* at 7-8 (“Rural economies benefit most from quality of life investments.”).