

Submitter: Eugene Griffith
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Chair Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

I write in strong support of House Bill 4134, which would increase Oregon's state transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.75% to fund critical wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and natural resource programs.

Oregon's outdoor landscapes are the foundation of its tourism economy. Visitors come to this state for its wild rivers, diverse wildlife, old-growth forests, and scenic public lands. Yet Oregon is currently failing to invest meaningfully in protecting the very resources that draw those visitors. The number of imperiled species in Oregon has grown from 294 to 321 in just the past decade. Wildfire continues to threaten communities and habitats statewide. Invasive species spread unchecked. These are not abstract concerns — they are direct threats to Oregon's long-term economic vitality and quality of life.

HB 4134 is a smart, user-pays solution. Visitors who benefit from Oregon's natural amenities will contribute — through a modest addition to their lodging bill — to sustaining those very amenities. The increase amounts to \$1.25 per \$100 spent on lodging, a small price that generates meaningful, dedicated funding for ODFW's Wildlife Action Plan, wildfire risk reduction, invasive species control, wildlife connectivity, and compensation for ranchers whose livestock are lost to wolves.

This last point deserves emphasis. Rural Oregonians who share their land and livelihoods with wolves and other large carnivores bear a disproportionate burden of statewide conservation commitments. HB 4134 begins to distribute those costs more fairly, using revenue from the broader public that benefits from Oregon's wildlife to compensate those who pay the most direct price for it.

The bill is also fiscally sound. Investing in prevention and maintenance is always cheaper than waiting for crisis. The cost of keeping species off the Endangered Species List is a fraction of what federal recovery mandates require once species are listed. HB 4134 is an investment in avoiding far greater future costs.

I urge the committee to support HB 4134 and send it forward to the Senate. Oregon's wildlife, working lands, and communities are counting on durable, dedicated funding — and this bill delivers it.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene Griffith