

Submitter: Ryan Jasperson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134  
Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ryan Jasperson, and I am a board member of Oregon Wild. I urge your support for HB 4134, "1.25% for Wildlife."

As members of the Finance and Revenue Committee, you understand that sound fiscal policy requires investing in assets that generate economic returns. Oregon's outdoor recreation industry contributes \$16 billion in consumer spending annually, supports 192,000 jobs, and accounts for 2.6% of our state's GDP - higher than the national average. Yet we have zero dedicated state funding to protect the 321 imperiled species and habitats that are the foundation of this economic engine. This is not sustainable fiscal policy.

HB 4134 corrects this imbalance through a modest 1.25 percentage point increase to the state transient lodging tax. This mechanism is economically sound for three reasons:

First, the revenue source aligns with those who benefit. Over 60% of transient lodging tax revenue comes from out-of-state visitors who travel to Oregon specifically to experience our natural resources. This creates a sustainable funding cycle that strengthens our tourism economy.

Second, the impact is minimal. For a \$200 hotel room, this represents a \$2.50 increase. Businesses already collect this tax, so no new administrative burden is created. They retain 5% of collected taxes, meaning they'll see increased revenue from this change.

Third, economic evidence shows this will not harm tourism. An independent 2025 economic assessment of neighboring states with lodging tax rates 2-5 times higher than Oregon's found comparable or stronger growth in tourism with no adverse effects. Oregon's own data shows visitor volume continued to increase when we raised the state TLT from 1% to 1.8% in 2016. Montana increased their rate by 1% in 2020, Vermont by 3% in 2024 - both saw continued tourism growth. Even with this increase, Oregon would remain the 3rd lowest state lodging tax rate in the nation.

The cost of inaction is real and measurable. The "Winter Wings" birding festival in Klamath Falls was cancelled three years running due to declining bird populations - a direct economic loss. Agricultural losses from bat die-off are estimated between

\$426-\$495 million annually. Investing in conservation now is far more cost-effective than crisis management later.

This bill also addresses immediate priorities: wildfire risk reduction through the Oregon Conservation Corps, invasive species response, and anti-poaching enforcement. These are investments in community safety and economic resilience.

HB 4134 has secured 26 bipartisan co-sponsors, support from over 70 organizations, and backing from nearly 100 Oregon businesses. According to a May 2025 poll, 71% of Oregonians believe protecting biodiversity should be a state priority.

At a time when federal conservation funding is uncertain, Oregon must act. This is fiscally responsible policy that protects our natural capital, strengthens our tourism economy, and honors Oregonians' values.

I respectfully urge a yes vote on HB 4134.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ryan Jaspersen, PhD  
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