

I strongly urge you support and vote yes on HB 4134. This may be the last lifeline for the hundreds of fish and wildlife species in Oregon currently in decline or needing help to secure adequate habitat to sustain populations into the future.

My personal passion for being in the outdoors and experiencing wildlife across the state in the form of bird watching, hunting or simply being present in wilder places, led me to a career in wildlife management. For 26 years I worked in a variety of positions for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) the last four years as the Director of the agency. This has given me a broad perspective as to how our populations of wildlife have changed over the years. I observed and experienced the rapid loss of habitat and direct impacts to animals through poaching, loss of critical habitats to development, invasive species, poor forest management, and more recently climate change and the devastation of wildfires. HB 4134 addresses many of these concerns but most importantly the implementation of ODFW's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Through its development and updates over the last 20 years the SWAP, formerly called the Oregon Conservation Plan, has been held up as one of the best in the country and a standard that other states looked to. The SWAP addresses the needs of the myriad of species that are not hunted or fished for, referred to as "nongame species", which have never had an adequate or consistent funding base. A significant portion of ODFW's budget comes from the sale of hunting and fishing license and tag fees which has left little for all the other species ODFW is required to maintain viable and stable populations.

This is not the first time requests have been made to the Legislature for nongame funding. Attempts to generate funds from the sale of outdoor gear and wildlife watching supplies such as bird seed and binoculars fell flat. Vehicle license plate revenue, optional tax check-off donations and habitat stamps sales over the last 20 years have had limited success with no long-term provisions. What comparatively few general fund dollars that were provided for critical nongame work in the past were radically reduced by the legislature in the late 1990's and early 2000's. HB 4134 eliminates the fight for limited general fund or lottery dollars and now has bipartisan support to finally address and turn the corner on funding the needs of hundreds of declining wildlife species.

A 2006 survey conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Public showed that over 1.5 million Oregonians participated in wildlife watching. Then as they do now, those wildlife watchers generate millions of dollars towards the state's economy and have a positive impact on job creation. They want to see this bill passed as do the hunters and anglers of Oregon so they know these species have a chance for the future as well as the future of their recreational opportunities. Development continues to spread across the state, energy needs are creating solar farms covering square miles instead of acres, wildfires are eliminating thousands of acres of important habitat annually with more anticipated this year. Federal land environmental

policies and habitat restoration programs are being reduced and, in some cases, eliminated. Directives to federal land managers are once again focused on extractive practices for the short-term economic gain at the expense of long-term wildlife losses. The negative impacts to wildlife and their habitats are growing at exponential rates and will continue to do so.

Where man's conflicts with wildlife were negotiated, the needs of wildlife were often heavily compromised. We are now at a point where there is little to no room to compromise what's left of a precious natural resource. Those opposed to HB 4134 are short sighted in their belief that tourism will drop in Oregon, and people will not come to their events due to a 1.25% on lodging fees. Oregon has one of the lowest transient lodging taxes in the country even with the proposed increase. The tradeoff between paying an extra \$3.75 for a \$300 room and seeing many of Oregon's species become listed as Threatened or Endangered or even worse, going extinct, is self-serving for the few at the expense of all Oregonians.

Now is the time to act positively on HB 4134. Bipartisan support remains and with the addition of changes to last year's bill, a number of concerns have been addressed. Oregon needs your leadership now on an issue that has been before the legislature many times in the past with very little success. Looking back over the last 50 years of my involvement in natural resource protection I am deeply concerned about our wildlife's future. Please take this opportunity to do what is needed and what is right for Oregon's fish and wildlife resources.

Thank you,

Jim Greer