

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

My name is Robyn Draheim and I am the coordinator of the Oregon Invasive Species Council. The role of the Council is to act as a catalyst on invasive species issues, providing leadership and facilitating collaborative efforts across our wide network of members.

The testimony provided herein is intended to provide factual context and discussion points for legislative deliberation. Its intent is informational in nature, reflecting documented evidence and professional expertise, not advocacy for or against any policy position.

Invasive species are animals, plants, and microorganisms that are not native to Oregon and once here can reproduce so vigorously that they replace our native species. They pose a threat to key sectors of Oregon's economy that depend upon natural resources and native ecosystems. Agriculture, forestry, tourism, and water resource infrastructure, including hydropower facilities, are at serious risk of being adversely impacted by invasive species. Unchecked, invasive species individually and collectively have the potential to imperil public health and to transform ecosystems, resulting in widespread economic and environmental devastations.

The State of Oregon is facing an unprecedented threat from invasive species, including freshwater mussels that could alter how we recreate in our lakes and rivers, insect pests like spotted lanternfly that could be devastating to our wineries and fruit producers, and terrestrial weeds that continue to take over degraded habitats turning them into high fire-risk corridors.

Charged with protecting Oregon's natural resources and economy by planning and leading a coordinated and comprehensive campaign to prevent the introduction of invasive species and eradicate, contain, or manage existing invasive species in Oregon, the Council was established by the Oregon Legislature in 2001 (ORS 570.755). The Council's primary role, as designated, is to convene and coordinate Oregon's invasive species leadership to conduct a coordinated and comprehensive effort to prevent the entry of invasive species. This focus on statewide strategic planning distinguishes the Council's role from the roles of other state agencies.

As established in statute, Council responsibilities include management and oversight of:

- OISC Invasive Species Control Account
- Statewide Invasive Species Strategic Action Plan
- Education and Outreach Grants
- Education of the Public and Policy Makers
- Statewide Invasive Species Reporting Hotline

As proposed in HB4134, additional funding for council operations would allow the Council to increase its support for its statutory responsibilities, including supporting the State Reporting Hotline (which receives many 100s of reports each year including the second detection of an invasive mitten crab in the Willamette River in October, 2025 and the first verified report of

emerald ash borer in Multnomah County in summer 2025) and potentially offering competitive Education and Outreach Grants on a recurring basis. The 2025 Invasive Species Education and Outreach Grant, made possible by one-time funding in 2024 through SB5701, represented the first-ever state-funded grant program overseen by the Council. We received over \$700,000 in funding requests from 34 qualified applications representing all regions of the state and were able to award \$170,000 to support 10 projects that increase awareness of the impacts, spread, prevention, detection, and management of invasive species issues in Oregon. Awards were distributed throughout the state to a diverse array of entities including the Coquille Watershed Association, Crooked River Weed Management Area, High Desert Museum, Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District, Malheur County, Wheeler Soil and Water Conservation District, and more.

Funding for the Council's Invasive Species Control Account will allow the Council to continue to allocate meaningful resources to emergency control projects. With the estimated cost of invasive species impacts in Oregon ranging from \$0.5B - \$3B annually, the Invasive Species Control Account allows the Council to facilitate rapid response and other management priorities such as eradication or control of new or expanding infestations by providing grants on an as needed basis and saves Oregon money by providing funds when they are most likely to contribute to success.

The state's ongoing work to prevent the introduction of invasive freshwater mussels like the zebra, quagga and the latest invader the golden mussel, provides an excellent opportunity to identify the nexus between tourism opportunities, invasive species prevention and the natural resources that we value in Oregon.

For now, Oregon's waterways remain free of established invasive freshwater mussel populations, but the threat is immediate. In 2023, quagga mussel larvae were detected in the Snake River near Twin Falls, Idaho, an uncomfortably close-to-home first detection in the Columbia River Basin and potential threat to recreation opportunities and irrigation systems in eastern Oregon. Idaho has since spent over \$9 million over three years of intensive chemical treatments, resulting in thousands of fish killed (including 48 white sturgeons up to 35 years old) without confirmed eradication. Detections recurred in September 2024 and again in 2025, despite the infested area shrinking from 7.2 to 3.5 miles.

Columbia River Basin studies estimate ~\$500 million in economic impacts to the PNW region. Oregon, Idaho and Montana estimate \$72-\$122 million in annual mitigation costs alone in their respective states from an invasive freshwater mussel infestation, excluding fish and wildlife impacts. The mussels clog hydroelectric facilities, irrigation infrastructure, and municipal water systems, and encrust boat hulls, docks, and marina infrastructure all of which directly affect recreational boating, an important draw for both residents and visiting tourists.

An additional emerging concern is the threat to data center cooling systems: Oregon and neighboring states in the Columbia River basin host a rapidly growing concentration of data centers that are highly dependent on reliable raw water sources for cooling. Invasive freshwater

mussels are well documented to obstruct water intake pipes, heat exchangers, and cooling infrastructure, and the risk extends to data center facilities drawing from waterways beyond the Columbia basin as mussel-fouled boats move between water bodies.

Oregon's watercraft inspection stations are the primary line of defense combined with education and outreach of both in-state boaters and recreators coming from out of state. A single contaminated vessel entering Oregon through a gap in inspection coverage could trigger an irreversible infestation. The Council's Invasive Species Control Account is the only pot of money readily available for rapid response should an invasive freshwater mussel infestation be detected in Oregon waters. However, having only been replenished with one-time funding once since its creation, the account, with a balance of \$247k, is a far cry from the \$3 million spent by Idaho on the first year of their mussel eradication response.

The Oregon Invasive Species Council is the *only* entity in Oregon specifically charged with coordinating invasive species efforts across jurisdictional boundaries. Its functions include providing support to programs that heighten awareness and prevention and public education campaigns such as "Clean, Drain, Dry" (minimize risks of aquatic invasive species hitchhikers through boating) and "Play, Clean, Go" (minimize risks of spreading invasive species from recreational activities), messaging that strives to protect the state's recreational activities and natural spaces. Promoting coordinated messaging campaigns is made possible through the Council's unique capacity for careful and strategic leveraging of resources and relationships across entities but even this reach is limited compared to the potential harm of invasive mussels..

In summary, invasive species pose documented and growing threats to Oregon's natural assets, from salmon and lamprey habitat to coastal estuaries, from riparian corridors to eastern Oregon rangelands, and to the economic infrastructure, cultural heritage, and ecological systems that underpin a \$14.3 billion tourism industry. Invasive grasses are accelerating a wildfire cycle whose smoke already costs Oregon tens of millions in tourism revenue and poses measurable public health risks statewide. The research literature consistently shows that prevention and early response cost substantially less than managing established invasions. The Council's Invasive Species Control Account, which was recently depleted by close to half a million dollars to bridge the Japanese beetle program in 2025, is the state's primary mechanism for rapid response while longer-term funding is assembled. The invasive species allocation within HB 4134 is designated in part to replenish this account and to fund the additional council priorities identified by the legislature when the Council was established.

Thank you for your time,

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Oregon Invasive Species Council