

Submitter: Laura M Ohanian  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

My name is Laura M. Ohanian, I've lived in Eugene for the past 32 years, and am writing in strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment, to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% to help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

This bill provides long-term, dedicated funding for conservation, and would secure sustainable funding for recovery of sagebrush ecosystems, connected wildlife corridors, and resilient landscapes that support biodiversity statewide. Healthy wildlife and habitats are essential to Oregon's economy, as our outdoor recreation and tourism economy depends on healthy, clean, and vibrant lands and waters. This outdoor economy contributes 2.6% of Oregon's GDP, supports 192,000 jobs, and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending. But we cannot have a strong tourism economy without healthy ecosystems. Protecting fish, wildlife, and habitats is not separate from economic vitality — it is foundational to it. Investing in conservation now supports local communities into the future and long-term economic resilience.

Oregon's identity is deeply tied to its natural legacy. Our native fish, wildlife, and diverse habitats — including the high desert and sagebrush steppe — are central to what makes Oregon special and to why people choose to visit, recreate, and live here. I, for one, was drawn here by the stunning environment and the wildlife who share our lovely state. Most Oregonians value wildlife and want to see it thrive, and many of us are proud of Oregon's natural heritage and care deeply about protecting it for future generations. A strong majority of Oregonians support dedicated funding to recover vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

State leadership is especially important right now. As federal funding and protections for wildlife and habitats are reduced, Oregon has an opportunity and a responsibility to step forward and invest in its natural legacy. HB 4134 would once again make Oregon a national leader. By passing this bill, Oregon can set an example for how states can proactively protect biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, support wildlife stewardship, and sustain healthy ecosystems. It's visionary policies like this that will be appreciated and celebrated decades from now, like Tom McCall's visionary policies regarding public access to beaches and the bottle bill are appreciated today.