

Submitter: Laura Benge

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

I, Laura Benge support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

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 live, visit, and recreate here.

Oregonians value wildlife and want to see it thrive. 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.

HB 4134 provides long-term, dedicated funding for conservation. This bill would secure sustainable funding to recover Oregon's most at-risk species and habitats, including sagebrush ecosystems, connected wildlife corridors, and resilient landscapes that support biodiversity statewide.

Healthy wildlife and habitats are essential to Oregon's economy. Oregon's outdoor recreation and tourism economy depends on healthy lands and waters. The outdoor economy contributes 2.6% of Oregon's GDP, supports 192,000 jobs, and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending.

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 and long-term economic resilience.

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 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.