

Submitter: Jay Withgott

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Two years ago, a friend from Connecticut came to visit and I took him on a trip through the natural areas of central and southwest Oregon. A professional tour leader, he was so impressed by what he experienced in our state that this spring he is returning with a group and we are leading his company's first commercial birdwatching tour in Oregon. A dozen East-Coast tour participants are spending thousands of dollars toward lodging and restaurants across our state, from the north and central coast to the most remote regions of Lake County and Harney County.

I could relate many more stories like this, because our birds, wildlife, and scenic natural areas are what draw a huge proportion of visitors to our state. Oregon's reputation as a natural wonderland is our single biggest asset. Our lodging industry benefits directly and substantially from efforts to protect wildlife and natural areas. Thus, it only makes sense that out-of-state visitors and Oregonians with the financial means to travel contribute to the conservation of our natural amenities through a portion of our lodging taxes. As such, HB 4134 is a logically targeted piece of legislation that will enable us to harness funding from outside our state for the much-needed conservation of Oregon's most valuable resources. Thank you for your support of this bill.