

Submitter: Elizabeth Stepp

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

My name is Elizabeth Stepp and I live in NE Portland. I strongly support HB 4134 with the amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25%. I moved to Oregon to go to graduate school and stayed because this state's natural legacy, its landscapes and features, are unique, beautiful and diverse. As shown on our state's license plate, Oregonians value the natural world. Visitors from the world over come here to enjoy it also. HB 4134 provides needed long-term dedicated and sustainable funding to help preserve and recover at-risk species and habitats. As our state's human population grows this support will be even more important to protect wildlife diversity and the habitats upon which they depend. Oregon's outdoor recreation and tourism economies also depend upon a healthy natural environment, including clean lands and waters. These kinds of activities positively impact the entire state, helping to economically support both urban and rural areas. We cannot have a strong tourism economy without healthy ecosystems.

With reduced federal funding and reduced protections for wildlife and habitats, with continued pressures on remaining natural habitats and with some declining wildlife populations, it is especially important for Oregon to step forward and invest in it's natural legacy now. The outdoor economy contributes 2.6% of Oregon's GDP, supports 192,000 jobs and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending.

Oregon is known to be a leader in policy innovation and public programs. By passing this bill, Oregon can set an example of how states can proactively protect biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, support wildlife stewardship, and sustain healthy ecosystems. Think also of future Oregonians and the legacy that will be passed onto them.

I am a birdwatcher, hiker, conservation volunteer and outdoor enthusiast who has over the past 36 years enjoyed Oregon's natural environment whenever I can. I've visited most of the state's regions and continue to explore and learn. Born and raised in Honolulu, I witnessed the ecological destruction of natural habitats, loss of native wildlife and the severe degradation of stream and shoreline ocean waters that continue to take place. I care deeply about Oregon's natural legacy and strongly support it's protection for future generations and also to support our state's economy. Please vote YES on HB 4134. Thank you.