



Date: February 27, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

RE: **HB 3159 - Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund**

On behalf of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition (OWC) - which includes Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Portland Audubon, Oregon Wild, and Western Environmental Law Center - we are writing to encourage your support for HB 3159, Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund. Together we represent over 100,000 members and supporters who care about the conservation of Oregon's wildlife and wildlands. Given the importance of this issue to our coalition, we have designated HB 3159 as priority legislation for the 2023 legislative session.

Oregon is fortunate to be home to a diverse array of fish and wildlife species and the habitats they rely upon. However, growing threats from climate change, invasive species, habitat loss and fragmentation and other human-made and natural-caused impacts are taking a toll on native wildlife's ability to thrive. In Oregon, there are nearly 300 species that are considered 'species of greatest conservation need', meaning they face elevated risks of extinction. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has a blueprint for conserving these species and habitats, known as the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy (Conservation Strategy). The goals of the Conservation Strategy are to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing declines in these resources where possible.

However, due to inconsistent and insufficient funding for these conservation programs, ODFW does not have resources to implement many of the necessary actions recommended in the Conservation Strategy. The combination of mounting threats to our fish and wildlife with a lack of dedicated funding to address those issues underscores the urgency of passing HB 3159 - Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund. Further delay puts these species' future in jeopardy.

To pay for these critical conservation programs, HB 3159 would utilize a 1.5% increase in the state transient lodging tax to generate approximately \$30 million a year for proactive,

collaborative wildlife and habitat conservation. This is a bold, yet cost-effective solution that would provide a steady, sustainable source of funds to ODFW's Conservation Strategy to help offset the increasing impacts of tourism and other natural and human-caused impacts on Oregon's most at-risk fish, wildlife, and habitats.

Oregonians have a strong interest in healthy populations of native flora and fauna and the habitats that sustain them.

Please vote YES on HB 3159 - Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Members of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition

Cascadia Wildlands

Center for Biological Diversity

Defenders of Wildlife

Humane Society of the United States

Humane Voters Oregon

Oregon Wild

Portland Audubon

Western Environmental Law Center