

Jessica Schafer Full Testimony in Support of HB 3159

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me the time to testify in support of HB 3159. My name is Jessica Schafer. I am a former resident of Oregon now living in Washington state. I am also the former Pacific Program Director and Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Pacific for Wildlands Network. I no longer serve in that role, and I am testifying as a private citizen in support of HB 3159.

As it was already stated in Tuesday's hearing, this bill is imperative for Oregon's vulnerable wildlife and landscapes. We no longer have the time to continue to pass the issue of funding to support Oregon's wildlife and landscapes to future generations because the realized cost, although seemingly high now, will only become more and more expensive as we turn to recovering our species and landscapes. The gravity of the situation warrants a bold and proactive solution that HB 3159 provides.

There will never be a perfect revenue-raising strategy. There have been several studies and past attempts to address the shortage in funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's implementation of the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy. The current proposal in HB 3159, increasing the transient lodging tax by 1.5 percentage points, is directly relevant to the user impact on our species and landscapes making the nexus incredibly clear, but also provides the level of funding required to address the issue. From July 2021 to June 2022 the statewide lodging revenue was 2.1 billion dollars. The current 1.5% transient lodging tax generated approximately \$31.5 million. \$31.5 million dollars would only address a fraction of what is needed for species and landscape conservation as laid out in the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy, but it would provide a significant amount to make a needed difference.

I am a frequent traveler throughout the Pacific states. Last year alone my family and I spent approximately three weeks in the state of Oregon visiting Bend, Florence, Ashland, Eugene, Crater Lake, and Portland. This year, to date, we have scheduled 5 days in Seaside, Oregon and several visits to Portland. We visit Oregon because we enjoy Oregon's unparalleled landscapes, wildlife watching and outdoor recreation. My family and I are part of the many tourists spending approximately \$939 million dollars in the state of Oregon for non-consumptive outdoor recreation opportunities including wildlife watching, birding, hiking, and wildflower observation. We have built sandcastles on the beach, gone tide pooling, rafted, mountain biked, hiked, watched wildlife, went birding, and skiing. I am highly supportive of travel tax dollars going toward a regenerative tourist market that directly supports the vulnerable landscapes and species that drives my family's tourism in the state of Oregon and in fact impacts those species and landscapes. Outdoor recreational tourism is a large market draw for business in Oregon. I support the use of travel tax dollars directly offsetting my impacts on the landscape and species of Oregon.

The Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy is considered a gold standard in the world of state wildlife action plan. However, to make the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy an effective strategy the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy must be funded. We cannot continue to rely solely on the hunting and angling communities to prop up our responsibility to our species and landscapes. We must spread that burden to other industries and the tourist themselves that are directly impacting Oregon's most imperiled landscapes and species.

Now is the time to be bold and proactive in addressing the need for clear directed funding for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's implementation of the Oregon Conservation and Nearshore Strategy by supporting HB 3159.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 3159.