



Co Chairs Rep Helm and Rep Owens, Vice Chair: Rep Finger McDonald, and Members of the of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

My name is Joe Liebezeit, and I'm the Statewide Conservation Director for the Bird Alliance of Oregon. On behalf of our over 12,000 members we urge you to please support passage of HB 2977 - "1% for wildlife". The Bird Alliance of Oregon's mission is to "Inspire all people to love and protect birds, wildlife, and the natural environment upon which life depends." At 122 years old, we are the longest serving conservation organization in Oregon.

Supporting an increase in transient lodging tax is a tough request but knowing that the funds will go to recover Oregon's most at-risk species and habitats should make it a no-brainer. Visitors and tourists from around the world pay money in lodging, food and other fees to visit our state to view our amazing wildlife. This includes species like the iconic Tufted Puffin at Haystack Rock, elusive Greater Sage-Grouse leks in eastern Oregon, or to catch a fleeting view of the American Pika on a hike in the cascades. If we want these species around in the coming decades we need to give them a helping hand.

The species mentioned above are just the tip of the iceberg. In 2015, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife identified nearly 300 species in the state at an elevated risk of extinction and 11 habitats of conservation concern. Despite this, current funding to implement Oregon's Conservation Strategy (State Wildlife Action Plan) is only a tiny fraction of what we need to give these species and habitats a fighting chance. Habitat loss and degradation, a changing climate, invasive species, and other natural and human-made impacts are taking a heavy toll on Oregon's birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, and bees.

Passage of the "1% for Wildlife" bill would set forward a bold, proactive solution that will help recover at-risk species now – a more efficient and cost-effective path forward rather than waiting until species are on the brink of extinction. This bill would establish the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund financed by an increase to the statewide Transient Lodging Tax. Funding will be used to implement Oregon's State Wildlife Action Plan to conserve and recover Oregon's most vulnerable wildlife and habitat and to ultimately keep our growing outdoor tourism industry thriving for generations to come.

The Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) requires persons who rent overnight lodging to pay a state tax of 1.5%, a rate that is one of the lowest in the country; only Alaska and California are lower.¹ The bulk of the in-state TLD revenue would be generated in the Portland metro region (44%)² and most by out-of-state visitors (63%).³ Approximately \$30 million would be raised annually to go to wildlife and habitat recovery.⁴

Please support HB 2977!

¹ Oregon Revised Statutes 320.305, "Rate and Computation of Tax" https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_320.305; Oregon Revised Statutes 320.300 "ORS 320.300 Definitions for ORS 320.300 to 320.365" https://oregon.public.law/statutes/ors_320.300; 2024 HVS Lodging Tax Report – USA, HVS (Sept. 23, 2024), <https://www.hvs.com/article/10015-2024-hvs-lodging-tax-report-usa>.

² Travel Oregon, *The Economic Impact of Travel* (April 2024), <https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Final-report-with-updated-clackamas-and-WV-numbers.pdf> (Page 13);

Oregon Dep't of Revenue, *Oregon's State Lodging Tax, Program Description and Characteristics of Taxpayers: Calendar Years 2009-2018* (April 2019), https://www.oregon.gov/dor/programs/gov-research/Documents/state-lodging-report_604-005.pdf (Table 2.2) (Page 16).

³ Travel Oregon, *The Economic Impact of Travel* (April 2024), <https://industry.traveloregon.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Final-report-with-updated-clackamas-and-WV-numbers.pdf> (Page 16).

⁴ See Oregon Department of Revenue, *Oregon's State Lodging Tax, Program Description and Characteristics of Taxpayers: Calendar Years 2009-2018* (April 2019), https://www.oregon.gov/dor/programs/gov-research/Documents/state-lodging-report_604-005.pdf (Table 1.2) (Page 12). Funding estimate derived from a June 2022 ODFW estimate.