



My name is Pauline Hice, a representative for the Oregon Wildlife Rehab Association, and I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB 2977, the 1% for Wildlife Bill.

Imagine a shallow marsh where two beady amphibian eyes break the water's surface, a waterbird wades gracefully, plucking insects from the water, and a beaver drags heavy willow branches, strengthening their dam and maintaining the wetland. This picture is just one example of the many diverse and fragile ecosystems that are found in Oregon, and which endangered species like the Black legged stilt and Oregon spotted frog rely on. This delicate balance that has supported Oregon's fish, wildlife, residents, and visitors for generations is disappearing.

The Oregon department of fish and wildlife has identified at least 330 Species of Greatest Conservation Need and 201 Species of Greatest Information Need in their current draft of the 2026 State Wildlife Action Plan, which will direct conservation actions for imperiled species and habitat for the next ten years. But **without funding for on-the-ground conservation and recovery efforts in this Plan, listing species as vulnerable is meaningless.** A 1% increase in Oregon's transient lodging tax would provide ODFW with essential funding to implement and advise partners on targeted conservation strategies including research, restoration, and sustainable resource management methods.

Oregon's natural beauty is the foundation of our \$8 billion ecotourism industry, drawing visitors from around the world. Investing in its protection is not just an environmental necessity but an economic one. Tourists - while recreating, fishing, hunting, camping, and hiking - disproportionately impact Oregon's fish, wildlife and habitats and reap the benefits of the conservation work - but do not currently directly help or contribute to them through our tax system. This model is not sustainable.

A modest 1% increase in the lodging tax is an extremely small price for tourists - the majority from out of state - to ensure the long-term preservation of Oregon's imperiled species and habitats—safeguarding the very landscapes that make our state a premier destination. If tourists, who primarily visit Oregon for its natural beauty, knew where this extra tax money would go, most would be happy to support it. This provides an opportunity for the tourism industry to support and ensure that outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, or wildlife viewing can continue for generations to come. Directed to ODFW, these funds would fuel crucial research and conservation efforts, giving endangered species a fighting chance. Without it, Oregon's wildlife will continue to struggle, with no clear path to recovery.

We urge you to support this bill, which would provide ODFW with the proper funding to implement effective strategies and strengthen the work being done by organizations like Think Wild. Whether the spotted frog, black-legged stilt, or the wetlands they call home, we all share a connection with our most vulnerable natural neighbors, and it is time we translate our words into action. Thank you for your time and consideration.

