



February 24, 2025

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Central Oregon LandWatch Testimony in support of HB 2977 - Support

Co-Chair Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2977. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of more than 950 members. Its offices are located in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for preserving natural resources in Central Oregon for over 30 years.

LandWatch strongly supports the passage of HB 2977.

HB 2977—“1% for Wildlife”—proposes a critical funding mechanism to support the recovery and conservation of Oregon’s most imperiled fish and wildlife species. In the face of climate change and the ongoing biodiversity crisis, it is essential that we bolster our state’s fish and wildlife agency to fully implement the Oregon State Wildlife Action Plan. This plan is a vital strategy for conserving at-risk species and their habitats.

Unfortunately, current funding levels fall far short of what is needed to implement the Action Plan effectively. This gap hinders our ability to protect and recover Oregon’s fish and wildlife.

Oregon’s diverse wildlife and ecosystems play a pivotal role in our thriving tourism industry. Outdoor recreation generates \$15.6 billion in consumer spending annually, supporting 224,000 jobs and \$9.3 billion in wages. In Deschutes County alone, visitors spent \$744 million in 2019, underscoring the importance of healthy natural resources to the local economy.

However, our wildlife faces increasing pressures. Wildfires, persistent drought, habitat loss, invasive species, and growing vehicle traffic are fragmenting ecosystems and forcing wildlife to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Ensuring adequate resources for recovery and conservation will help wildlife remain resilient in the face of these challenges.



By increasing the state's transient lodging tax (TLT) by just 1%, Oregon can establish a sustainable, dedicated funding stream to address these urgent challenges. The current TLT of 1.5% is among the lowest in the nation. HB 2977 proposes raising the rate to 2.5%, generating approximately \$75 million annually, with \$30 million directed toward supporting fish and wildlife conservation.

Oregon's fish and wildlife are integral to our future. Supporting this bill is an investment in the continued health of our ecosystems and the prosperity of our communities.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Austin
Wild Lands & Water Program Director
Central Oregon LandWatch
2843 NW Lolo Dr St. 200
Bend, OR 97703

