

Testimony in Support of HB 2977

Chair, members of the committee, and esteemed colleagues,

My name is David Ellenberger. I am a resident of NE Portland and have worked in the wildlife conservation field for 30 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2977. This bill is crucial to preserving Oregon's unique wildlife by increasing funding for species conservation through a modest adjustment to the state's transient lodging tax.

Oregon is known for its diverse landscapes, from our towering forests and our high desert to our expansive coastlines and rugged mountains. It should come as no surprise that the wildlife within these ecosystems is just as diverse as these landscapes. Unfortunately, according to Oregon's 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan, 294 species and 11 native habitats require proactive restoration. What's worse, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have the funding needed to recover these species and their habitats, let alone funding to prevent additional species and habitats from joining this list. Immediate action is needed to ensure these species not only survive but thrive.

HB 2977 directs resources toward species recovery and habitat restoration, which is vital for the health of Oregon's wildlife. It creates a sustainable funding mechanism by logically linking the tourism industry to conservation efforts. By modestly increasing the transient lodging tax, we ensure that visitors who come to experience our state's breathtaking ecosystems also contribute to protecting what draws them to Oregon in the first place. Moreover, this measure is fiscally responsible, as it creates a reliable and ongoing funding stream for conservation efforts without putting an undue burden on Oregon's taxpayers.

I strongly urge you to support HB 2977. Passing this bill will protect Oregon's wildlife and help ensure future generations can enjoy the same natural wonders that make our state so special. This bill represents a vital investment in Oregon's future, economy, and environment. Thank you.

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