

Submitter: DJ Fletcher
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2977
Date: May 7, 2025

Re: 2025 HB 2977 "the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund Subaccount"

To: Members of the Oregon House Committee on Revenue

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Committee Members:

I am writing to ask for your support of HB 2977, the bill to secure long-term, dedicated, and stable funding for wildlife conservation in our state. Through a 1% increase in transient lodging tax (TLT), an estimated funding of \$30 million a year can be applied to the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund Subaccount for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to carry out the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

There is urgent need for stable funding of SWAP work to enable ODFW to focus on managing native fauna and flora and habitats most imperiled and in need of conservation. Funding would help prevent declines of at-risk species, reverse declines where possible, and enhance biodiversity of native plants and animals. There is also dire need for stable funding in order to manage threats and damage from natural and human-made impacts such as invasive species, climate change, natural disasters, and even wildlife tourism and outdoor recreation.

The Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund Subaccount needs stability to help fill a growing revenue gap. As you know, ODFW has depended on four major revenue sources, and going forward, ODFW will experience drops in at least two of the four: drops in federal funding, and drops in "Other Funds" that include a large amount of revenue from the sale of hunting, angling, and occupational licenses and tags. ODFW's 2021-23 data about the outlook for revenue from angling & hunting licenses and tags tells us that, "In the long run, changing demographic and social factors may depress sales of sport licenses and tags. . . . Hunting and fishing participation rates have been gradually declining in recent decades. . . ."

Oregon is a popular travel and recreation destination only because our state offers in-state and out-of-state outdoor enthusiasts so many different kinds of outdoor activities in unspoiled natural settings. You know that Oregon is recognized as a world-class destination for wildlife watching -- including bird and whale watching -- wild river rafting, marine and fresh-water boating, fishing, hiking, climbing, seeing

vistas from the Pacific Coast Trail, cycling, camping, and more. According to ODFW data, in 2019, contributions from recreating accounted for \$1.2 billion in spending -- a whopping \$1.47 billion in 2024 dollars -- and supported over 11,000 jobs. My point is that our state's future tourism popularity -- as well as the future economic prosperity of the Oregon hospitality & travel industry -- truly depends upon how well the State funds wildlife protection!

I would like to see a future in which the hospitality & travel PR folks are proud to advertise "1% for Wildlife" to promote Oregon as a model of conservation. I can tell you sincerely that my wine-tourist visitors from the East coast, who have turned into biennial Oregon eco-tourists, told me they'd "gladly pay" 1% more TLT to protect wildlife. Tourists like these and so many others will keep coming back, exploring more places, and spending more dollars here, if --only if-- the State preserves its wildlife and natural environments.

Please cast a YES vote on HB 2977.

Thank you,

DJ Fletcher
Central Point, OR