

Submitter:

Robert Rees

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2977

Good afternoon Chair Nathanson, vice chairs Reschke and Walters, along with members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Bob Rees, representing the NW Guides and Anglers Association, the Association of NW Steelheaders and the tens of thousands of sportfishers that recreate within our membership. We are in sound support of HB 2977, an increase in transient lodge taxes to the tune of just 1% to stave off the dramatic decline of Oregon's fish and wildlife species. I am also a board member of the National Wildlife Federation, a 30-year professional fishing guide and a proud 6th generation Oregonian.

With the re-opening of the Columbia River to spring Chinook tomorrow, it will mark just the 3rd pay day since last November that I'll be earning for my family. Our sportfisheries are on the ropes. Drastic declines in cold water species has shrunk my once robust fishing season from 150 meaningful days per year to just 50. It's a sign of the times as populations decline and habitats continue to degrade. HB 2977 aims to change the trajectory of this decline.

The possibility of increasing species recovery funding for ODF&W 30-fold offers meaningful opportunity to turn things around. The agency's budget is nowhere near robust enough to make a difference now and if Congress ever gets their act together to pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, there's a real chance that we could turn a corner for our suffering populations of fish and wildlife. This money would meet the criteria for the required match of federal funds that our community has sought for the last several legislative sessions.

1% for wildlife, funded by the customers that we take fishing and hunting is frankly, an under-investment for the benefits hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationalists would realize. Given that outdoor recreation takes place in rural Oregon, recovering our fish and wildlife, and the increased opportunity that goes along with that recovery, will continue to foster one of the greatest transfers of wealth from urban to rural communities that this body has long sought. There are no losers here, and frankly I find it befuddling that the establishments that lodge our customers wouldn't support such an investment. I mean are our customers really going to blink an eye at an additional \$3.00 charge for fish and wildlife as they look across the Columbia River estuary in a luxury room before catching 20-pound salmon the next day? I don't think so.

In conclusion, hunters and anglers are largely footing the bill for the conservation mission of ODF&W. There has been many attempts to deal with the fish and wildlife crisis that continues to increase, Oregonians and visitors alike wish to see meaningful investment for a future Oregon with robust populations of this resource.

Thank you for your service to Oregon, we urge a yes vote for HB 2977.