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May 8, 2025

House Committee on Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2977

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice-Chair Walters, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Michelle Emmons, and I serve as Co-executive Director & Upper Willamette Riverkeeper of Willamette Riverkeeper, a nonprofit dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Willamette River and its tributaries. I am writing today to express Willamette Riverkeeper's strong support of HB 2977, the 1% for Wildlife bill.

Oregon's wild places are the foundation of a vibrant outdoor recreation economy that contributes more than **\$16 billion annually and supports over 220,000 jobs statewide**. From the snowpack in the Cascades to the meandering Willamette River, these natural resources attract millions of visitors each year and provide Oregonians with essential spaces for physical, mental, and cultural well-being.

But this popularity comes with a cost. Outdoor recreation—while vital to our economy—places increasing pressure on fragile habitats. Along the Willamette, salmon are struggling to adapt to warming waters, altered flows, and degraded spawning grounds. Avian species like the bald eagle, western meadowlark, and green heron depend on intact riparian corridors—many of which are disappearing under the weight of human activity.

Effectively stewarding these resources requires funding, coordination, and long-term investment. HB 2977 offers a clear, transparent solution. A modest 1% assessment on certain travel and recreation related purchases could potentially generate millions annually for habitat restoration, public education, and critical stewardship projects—without placing undue burden on consumers or businesses.

HB 2977 directly aligns with the growing interest from Oregon's travel and tourism sector to adopt more sustainable practices. Industry leaders, destination management organizations, and economic development groups have all identified the degradation of natural areas as a shared risk—and have expressed the need for meaningful solutions that ensure the long-term viability of Oregon as a premier outdoor destination. This bill creates a much-needed mechanism for the travel economy to reinvest in the very landscapes that sustain it.

The return on this small investment is extraordinary: enhanced ecological resilience, increased access to quality outdoor experiences, and preserved biodiversity for generations to come. In a time of climate uncertainty, investing in wildlife and habitat is also an investment in our health, our economy, and our future.

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