House Committee on Revenue

Oregon State Capitol

900 Court St. NE

Salem, OR 97301

Re: **Testimony on HB 2977 ("1% for Wildlife")**

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

Under federal law, each state is required to develop and maintain a comprehensive State Wildlife Action Plan, or SWAP. These plans identify "species of greatest conservation need," the threats to their survival, and the strategies necessary to conserve them. Importantly, they also serve as the foundation for federal matching programs under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's State and Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. In this way, Oregon's SWAP is more than an aspirational vision—it is a science-based and federally aligned roadmap for conservation, authorized and recognized by law.

Despite being updated in 2015 with strong public and scientific input, Oregon's SWAP has remained largely an unfunded mandate. This has constrained the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife from implementing its most pressing conservation priorities, including habitat restoration, migratory corridor protection, and proactive disease surveillance. While the need for action has grown, the funding to meet that need has not kept pace.

Meanwhile, Oregon's hunters and anglers continue to serve proudly as the primary rate-payers for wildlife management. We take that responsibility seriously and are stepping up once again, with fee increases scheduled over the next three biennia. But we also know that ODFW cannot meet the full scope of its conservation obligations without additional, stable, and state-controlled funding. This is particularly urgent as federal funds, including critical support from programs like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, face increasing uncertainty.

HB 2977 proposes a modest 1 percent increase to the transient lodging tax. These funds would be directed specifically to SWAP implementation through the Recovering Oregon's Wildlife Fund Subaccount. It is a commonsense way to share responsibility more broadly,

capturing revenue from the millions of visitors who come here to experience Oregon's outdoor landscapes.

This is also a sound economic investment. According to a recent analysis by Williamson and Haggerty (2025), this 1 percent increase would generate an estimated $27.6 million annually, boosting ODFW's budget by roughly 10 percent. The study finds no correlation between modest lodging tax increases and reduced visitor spending. In fact, states with significantly higher lodging tax rates, such as Idaho and Utah, consistently outperform Oregon in both tourism growth and outdoor recreation's contribution to state GDP.
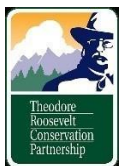
Their findings affirm a broader truth: public investment in quality-of-life infrastructure including fish, wildlife, and habitat offer a strong return public investment. Further, these Investments help rural and urban communities alike attract visitors, retain residents, and grow economic opportunity. HB 2977 represents a proven, cost-effective way to do just that.

With stable funding, we can:

• Maintain habitat connectivity that supports ranchers, wildlife, and hunters alike

• Respond to emergent wildlife disease with the consistency it requires

• Foster collaborative partnerships with landowners whose stewardship benefits us all

Above all, as Oregonians, we have a shared responsibility to care for the natural landscapes that define our state; whether farmland, forest, or sagebrush steppe. HB 2977 gives us the chance to invest in those ecologies, in every district, for the benefit of current and future generations.

On behalf of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and Oregon's sporting community, I respectfully urge your support. This is pragmatic, science-backed policy that aligns state law with federally authorized conservation priorities. It protects not only our fish and wildlife, but also the hunting, angling, and outdoor traditions that make Oregon special.

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