

June 24, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Central Oregon LandWatch Testimony on HB 2977 - Support

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2977. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of more than 950 members. Its offices are located in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for preserving natural resources in Central Oregon for over 30 years.

LandWatch strongly supports the passage of HB 2977.

HB 2977 proposes a critical funding mechanism to support the recovery and conservation of Oregon’s fish and wildlife species. In the face of climate change and the ongoing biodiversity crisis, it is essential that we bolster our state’s ability to fully address the challenges facing Oregon’s wildlife today.

Unfortunately, current funding levels fall far short of what is needed to implement a broad array of programs and plans effectively, including Oregon’s State Wildlife Action Plan. This gap hinders our ability to effectively steward, protect and recover Oregon’s fish and wildlife.

Oregon’s diverse wildlife and ecosystems play a pivotal role in our thriving tourism industry. Outdoor recreation generates \$15.6 billion in consumer spending annually, supporting 224,000 jobs and \$9.3 billion in wages. In Deschutes County alone, visitors spent \$744 million in 2019, underscoring the importance of healthy natural resources to the local economy.

However, our wildlife face increasing pressures. Wildfires, persistent drought, habitat loss, poaching, invasive species, and growing vehicle traffic are degrading ecosystems and forcing wildlife to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Ensuring adequate resources for recovery and conservation will help wildlife remain resilient in the face of these challenges.



By increasing the state's transient lodging tax (TLT) by just 1.25%, Oregon can establish a sustainable, dedicated funding stream to address these urgent challenges. The current TLT of 1.5% is among the lowest in the nation and raising the TLT by 1.25% would not change Oregon's ranking as the 48<sup>th</sup> lowest in the Country.

Oregon's fish and wildlife are integral to our future. Supporting this bill is an investment in the continued health of our ecosystems and the prosperity of our communities.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Austin  
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