

We are passionate viewers of Oregon wildlife and dabblers in the underlying ecological science. We want our grandchildren to experience the wonder and excitement of the Oregon environment that drew us here more than 45 years ago.

Thus, we write in support of HB 2977, a bill “to promote, implement, revise or enhance” fish, wildlife, and habitat recovery in Oregon. Oregon is blessed with outstanding geological features including the ocean, the shoreline, the mountains, the desert, and its rivers. However, these spectacular natural gifts are hollow without the diverse life that fills them.

Oregon’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), 1st issued in 2005 and updated in 2015 identified nearly 300 species and 11 native habitats needing proactive restoration actions. It appears that the only dedicated source of funding “to promote, implement, revise or enhance” fish, wildlife, and habitat recovery in Oregon through the SWAP is “from the sale of habitat conservation stamps and from the sale of any art works and prints related to the habitat conservation stamps.” See text proposed for replacement in HB 2977, proposed amendment to ORS 496.303 (13).

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2977/A-Engrossed> (Accessed June 26, 2025.) While these stamps are beautiful and enthralling, purchase is strictly voluntary and the price modest.

https://www.dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy/habitat_conservation_stamp.asp (Accessed June 26, 2025.) If you want to splurge, you can get a stamp signed by the governor and the artist for \$100. We couldn’t find information on the funds raised by habitat conservation stamps; it would take 10,000 signed stamps to raise \$1,000,000.

Environmental restoration projects are expensive. We have read that HB 2977 (1% for wildlife) would raise an estimated \$30,000,000 per year for restoration projects. We hope that will be enough to make progress in the backlog of needed restoration. For now, we are losing ground, rapidly.

HB 2977 would raise Oregon’s transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.75%*. Current receipts fund the Oregon Tourism Commission to encourage tourism in Oregon – a major economic driver in our state, so bountifully blessed by beauty attractive to tourists. As discussed above, the additional 1% is for wildlife. While restoration of wildlife and associated habitat is a vitally important objective on its own, enhanced natural resources also support tourism and its associated economic benefits. Thus, 1% (now 1.25%) for wildlife is a proper companion to the existing 1.5% transient lodging tax to support tourism.

We understand that in these uncertain times people are sensitive to tax increases. A 2.75% lodging tax doesn’t sound like much, and it isn’t. A family spending \$1,000 at one of our fine coastal resorts would contribute \$15 to support Oregon tourism and \$12.50 for wildlife – not much compared to what they are otherwise spending. Will that \$12.50 convince someone to go to another naturally blessed state – such as Wyoming? Unlikely. Wyoming would charge that family \$90, consisting of 4% sales tax and a 5% lodging tax. Indeed, Oregon, at 2.75%, would have a lower tax on lodging than at least 46 other states.

<https://www.avalara.com/mylodgetax/en/resources/state-lodging-tax-requirements.html> (accessed May 7, 2025). For another comparison consider Delaware. Like Oregon, Delaware does not assess a sales tax. Delaware does collect an 8% state lodging tax.

The burden resulting from HB 2977 (1% for wildlife) would be modest while the benefits to the environment would be significant. We urge the Senate to join the House to pass the bill and forward it to Governor Kotek for her signature.

Thank you.

James Alexander and Pamela Griffith

*We note that the engrossed HB 2977 added an additional .25% to the transient lodging tax beyond the 1% for wildlife initially proposed in HB 2977. The additional .25% would be split among several state agencies for conservation purposes.