

March 18, 2021

I am submitting this testimony in support of **HB 2844** to remove beavers (*Castor canadensis*) from classification as predatory animals in Oregon.

Beavers play a critical role in creating and sustaining healthy natural habitat in the Pacific Northwest (and elsewhere). Scientists call them a "keystone" species, because so many other species depend on the conditions beavers create for their own survival, just as a masonry arch depends on its keystone to stay together. With the dams they build, beavers not only create a beaver pond; they raise the surrounding water table under many acres of adjacent land, supporting lush, greener vegetation and storing water for later in the year so that streams continue to run even during the drier months when water is most needed. And since much of this stored water circulates underground, it stays cool and helps keep stream water cool as well, creating better conditions for fish, including salmon. In fact, salmon are one of the important species that depends on beavers, requiring cool, slow-moving water for upstream spawning habitat.

Beavers were once plentiful throughout Oregon--eastern as well as western. At one time every low-gradient stretch of nearly every stream and river in Oregon had beavers. But in the 1820s fur companies began a campaign to hunt Oregon beavers to extinction and killed tens of thousands over the next two decades. By the time American settlers began arriving in the 1840s, most of Oregon's beavers were gone and the unique environment they made possible was already beginning to change. Some beavers remained, but their populations were never able to recover or reinhabit their former range, because beaver trapping and depredation have continued up to the present day. As a result, stream and riparian habitat that beavers once kept cool and verdant have continued to degrade, becoming drier and poorer in species richness. If these practices can be halted at least on Oregon's public lands, much of this loss could be reversed.

As an Oregon resident, I care deeply about our natural environment and have spent many hours working on riparian restoration in rural Oregon. I have donated my personal time towards restoring beaver habitat and working alongside beaver to restore streams such as the South Fork of the Crooked River and Hay Creek on the lower Deschutes River. I do this work because I have studied the historic role that beavers once played in maintaining a healthy natural environment and have seen firsthand the many benefits they provide to the landscape, including mitigating the impacts of wildfire, droughts and climate change on ecosystems and agriculture and improving habitat for spawning salmon.

I strongly support **HB 2844** in recognition of the vital role that beavers play in Oregon's rural lands.

Sincerely,  
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