

RE: In Support of House Bill 3464, Oregon 2023 Legislative Session

I am writing in support of HB 3464 which would remove the predatory animal designation from beavers on private lands and reclassify beavers as a furbearer on private lands.

This change in beaver designation from predatory animal to furbearer on private lands has great value to eastern Oregon. Beavers and the habitat they create brings a host of benefits, many of them centered around water. Their habitat stores water for the dry times, dampens flood peaks limiting damage downstream, and provides vital fish and wildlife habitat and natural wildfire breaks to name a few. Beavers can also bring challenges when they cut down desired trees on a landowner's property, flood a road or block a culvert. The frustration that landowners feel is understandable, but there are alternatives to repeated killing of a beaver that are more cost effective and long-term. They also provide a landowner benefits such as elevated groundwater tables which enhance crop growth. It is this place of tension between benefits and challenges that HB 3464 will help.

We all get into habits of response that may have initially served us well, but do so less as time goes on. The problem returns and the solution becomes understood as a short-term, ineffective response but without any clear options. This is a key value of HB 3464. While private landowners could still kill beavers causing problems, it adds in a phone call to ODFW to request a permit. This call creates that important "**pause**" in the standard response to a wildlife problem which too often is to kill it only to have it return when another passes through -- with potentially more damage done before noticed.

During this call by the landowner, ODFW will be able to issue a permit for a take at the time of the phone call. However, the landowner will now learn that there are options to this recurring problem -- effective coexistence strategies and places to get help. Should the landowner decide to take that route, they will find the coexistence strategies more cost-effective and long-term. They will be able to keep the benefits gained from beaver presence and activity without the challenges. This may not change the outcome for this particular beaver, depending on the circumstance, but will in many cases shift thinking, approaches, and outcomes in the future.

Drought is increasingly common and severe, and the snowpack amount and timing of melt less predictable. Eastern Oregon needs to start taking advantage of the natural groundwater and surface water temporary storage that beaver habitat provides. For those private landowners who have the good fortune of a stream running through their property, a rise in their groundwater table as a result of beaver dams and ponds and seasonal flooding of their fields will likely make the difference in a dry year between complete crop failure versus enough to stay solvent or even turn a profit.

It takes time to create healthy stream systems and beavers can help. The **pause** that this bill creates between frustration and action will benefit private landowners in eastern Oregon and elsewhere, even if at first there is some additional frustration with the extra step. But later, when the drought returns, there will be relief experienced as the higher water table and ponds actively being maintained by beavers allow farms, ranches and fish and wildlife to still survive and potentially thrive. We need to create that future. HB 3464 helps do just that. I urge you to support it. Thank you for your consideration.

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