



March 22, 2023

House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon

RE: Support for HB 3464

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

Please accept this written testimony in support of HB 3464. Greater Hells Canyon Council is a Northeast Oregon-based grassroots conservation organization founded in 1967 that works to connect, protect, and restore the wild lands, waters, native species and habitats of the Greater Hells Canyon Region, ensuring a legacy of healthy ecosystems for future generations.

Working to strengthen ecological connectivity in the Greater Hells Canyon Region is at the core of everything we do. For strong habitat connectivity (and climate resilience more broadly), we need complex, dynamic riparian systems that recover quickly from disturbance, store their own water, and support the widest possible array of species. Systems with beavers better store, filter, and cool water, and keep streams running cleaner, colder, and later into the season. They irrigate floodplains and recharge groundwater. The wetlands they maintain are fire refugia, biodiversity hotspots, and carbon sinks. While living “with” beavers does present challenges, it also provides values and services that we desperately need.

With that in mind, we embarked on two years of collaborative work to better understand beaver presence and barriers to their re-establishment in our landscape (through the Northeast Oregon Beaver Survey Project). We then co-founded the Northeast Oregon Beaver Working Group to build capacity and momentum to restore beavers in Northeast Oregon—to secure all the benefits outlined above. The working group is open to anyone who is interested in our mission, and currently includes NGOs, restoration practitioners from watershed councils and Tribes, public agency staff, environmental education professionals, and members of the public.

Successful beaver reestablishment hinges on whether and how people choose to live alongside beavers and handle the challenges they sometimes bring. In the course of developing and sharing the Northeast Oregon Beaver Survey and convening the Northeast Oregon Beaver Working Group, we’ve talked with many landowners and water managers who’ve had beaver conflicts, and we’ve heard the same stories over and over:





“On my family’s property, we think beavers are interesting, but we end up getting rid of them because we can’t have our hay field flooded during these two months out of the year.” “We trapped them because they were eating our riparian plantings”. “We’re trying to reconnect our river to the floodplain so it’s irrigated and our cattle have more forage; we’re acting like beavers ourselves.”

Each of these stories is an opportunity: there are many land and water managers in an intermediate space, who may just need one or two challenges addressed in order to live peaceably with beavers. We aim to answer this opportunity with proven coexistence strategies. Peaceful coexistence between humans and beavers where beavers have already chosen to settle creates core safety zones from which they can disperse — including into headwaters where their work will be especially valuable.

We understand that landowners want to maintain autonomy in decision making on their lands, and HB 3464 will not change that. It will, however, streamline the science and management of the species in a way that will better allow land managers to have access to more resources and updated science on the species. ODFW is a natural fit for this role, but at this time and with beavers’ current classification, ODFW is under-resourced and unable to provide those tools at the scale that is needed. HB 3464 is an initial step at solving those problems, and many others.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jamie Dawson

Jamie Dawson
Conservation Director
Greater Hells Canyon Council

