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On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure: HB3464

Beaver-built ponds, wetlands, and wet meadows hold water in storage and slowly release it, helping to offset declines in stream flows and water quality related to declining snowpack and spring melt. Beaver activity helps ease climate induced drought, such as the recent persistent drought we have experienced in southwest Oregon.

Beavers create and maintain wetlands, wet meadows, and ponds, which are natural fire breaks. These areas provide refuge for livestock and wildlife during fires, and this habitat is critical to helping wildlife survive the winter. Because vegetation remains, these areas trap soil eroding from surrounding hillsides post-wildfire and prevent it from reaching streams which protects water quality.

Beavers create habitat that improves the function and diversity of the biological and physical systems native fish need to thrive. Ponds provide critical winter rearing habitat for juvenile Coho salmon. Ponds and wetlands temporarily store surface and groundwater which later contribute to cooler stream temperatures. Currently, the Department of Environmental Quality has identified more than 89,000 miles of streams as too warm to support native fish. The work of beavers improves riparian conditions resulting in greater vegetation and insect life which enhances food sources for native fish.

Farmers and ranchers need water to grow crops and raise livestock. Cities and towns need dependable high-quality water, and drinking water for many Oregonians come from our forests. Beaver-created habitats temporarily store water in ponds and in the ground, which is then slowly and sustainably released. Because the ponds create conditions that allow for regular groundwater recharge, benefits are maintained over time. This temporary storage helps offset impacts of drought and decreasing the frequency and magnitude of high water events.