

April 25, 2023

Dear Senator Findley,

I have been a Baker County resident for over 20 years and worked for the Forest Service out of Baker City for almost 16 years as a hydrologist/soils specialist before retiring in 2018. I consider this area my home.

Today, I am writing to ask you to support HB 3464 which would remove the predatory animal designation from beavers in Oregon and reclassify beavers as a furbearer. As you know, it made it through the House committee with a unanimous vote after an amendment was added that allows landowners the ability to take beaver without permit in response to imminent threat to infrastructure and crops damage.

I appreciate that there is some anxiety among some about this change but it has great value to eastern Oregon. Beavers and the habitat they create bring 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. Yet they come with challenges. Beavers can 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 result in a landowner gaining 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 or if there was imminent threat, then to report. 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 or take the report, but now the landowner will learn that there are options to this recurring problem -- effective coexistence strategies and places to get help. 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.

As drought becomes 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. My hope is that we will start to see this on public lands, but the benefits are great for 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 can make the difference in a dry year between complete crop failure and enough to stay solvent or even still 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 eastern Oregon even if at first there is some additional

frustration with the extra step. But later, when the drought returns and there is a high water table and ponds actively being maintained by beavers, the value will be seen and relief experienced. We need to create that future. HB 3464 helps do just that.

Thank you for your consideration.

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