

Oral testimony HB3464

My name is Ian Wilson and my family and I own and manage land on the Wallowa River near Lostine, OR. We are managing our land for multiple uses, including: grazing, grass production and fish and wildlife habitat. Our family has a long history of agriculture and managing the land for sustainable natural processes.

I am here to speak to you today about how house bill 3464 can assist wildlife managers and private landowners to gain a better overall understanding of beaver populations and realize the benefits from coexisting with beavers. Beavers serve an important role in restoring and maintaining ecosystems that provide a cascade of benefits to fish and wildlife species, individual landowners and communities alike. This may not always be the story you have heard regarding beavers.

I am working with my neighbors, community and the landscape to help support and explain the important niche our state animal occupies.

My family and I participated in a river restoration project last summer with one of the primary goals of restoring habitat for beavers so that they could recolonize the river floodplain and take over the long-term stewardship. Beaver created habitats cycle nutrients, store carbon and keep water on the landscape longer. Ponded habitats create and attract nurseries for juvenile salmon, steelhead and rainbow trout. We used beaver dam analogues on our restoration project to replicate beaver dams because they serve some of the same functions of creating habitat while also keeping water on the landscape longer. Beavers do the same work for free.

In collaboration with fellow community members, in 2020, we developed the NE Oregon Beaver survey on iNaturalist, an online platform where community scientist and natural resource professionals alike can report and share observations of beaver sign. Data from this survey helps inform spatial distribution of beavers in northeast Oregon and helps close the data gap. We have over 100 observations to date. These data are shared with natural resource managers for a more complete picture of beavers on the landscape outside of harvest reporting from public lands. HB 3464 will help fish and wildlife managers by closing the data gap from animals removed from private land.

We have also started a beaver working group in northeast Oregon, that includes: private landowners, hunters, trappers and natural resource professionals. One of our primary goals is to assist private landowners with concerns regarding beaver interactions. These solutions will include professional certificates and training in beaver mitigation tools that will seek successful, long-term outcomes that support community health. HB 3464 will open the door for dialogue between fish and wildlife professionals and private landowners to explore alternatives to coexisting with beavers.

We have had success with simply reaching out to landowners and offering help. Often times, our neighbors are open to dialogue and interested in learning about how they can live with beavers. HB 3464 aligns with this opportunity to open the door for alternative solutions outside of lethal removal, which often times has to be repeated. Beavers return to desirable habitat, making coexistence a more reasonable solution.

House Bill 3464 will provide private landowners and fish and wildlife managers greater flexibility when managing beavers on private property across a diverse set of landscapes within our state, while not removing any private landowner rights.

Therefore, I am asking for your support of HB 3464 so we can partner with our state animal and receive the many benefits they bestow.