

Submitter: Clover Leonard

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure: HB4014

Good afternoon Chair Pam Marsh and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment.

My name is Clover Leonard. I live on 5 acres that includes a small apple orchard in Medford, Oregon. I operate a U-pick business during harvest. I have done this since 2002. My customers include seniors, many families and school children on field trips. I keep my prices affordable, so anybody can afford fresh fruit and experience the joy of picking their own apples in the orchard.

In November 2022, I noticed some limbs on the ground. It looked odd and I wondered if some of my customers had tried to climb the trees and had broken off a limb. I had closed to the public on October 15, so no one had been in the orchard since then. After closer inspection, it appeared the limbs had been chewed off. My property borders Griffin Creek. What separates my orchard from the creek is blackberry bushes. I had previously noticed quite a few tunnels in the blackberries, but I thought they were just used by the raccoons, possums, occasional foxes. But I soon discovered limbs in the tunnels and that is when I realized the damage to my apple trees was probably from beavers.

They were, by now, stripping bark off the trees and trying to delimb them. They did serious damage to 10 trees and were ready to move on to the others.

I did research on how to rid my property of beavers. I tried offensive smelling sprays. The beavers just moved to another tree. I have 270 trees, so there was no shortage of trees to nibble. I didn't want to kill them or hire someone to kill them. I didn't know what to do, so I started calling local agencies but was always referred to another. I was achieving little success and lots of frustration. Finally, I called an agency that told me about Jakob from the Beaver Coalition. I contacted him and he came out to my property and suggested a solar-powered fence with 2 wires all along the creek side of my orchard. My property is almost 1500 feet long, so that was going to be a long fence. I wondered if I could afford such a project. I was presented with the proposition that I could apply for a grant to cover a portion of this fence.

The fence was installed and the damage to my apple trees has stopped. About a month after installation, there was an occasion where I noticed new damage to a couple trees. Jakob came out and lowered the bottom wire to prevent these very clever beavers from scooting under the fence. I haven't noticed any other damage. I had a very successful harvest in 2023. I am also very popular with the schools and hosted 9 field trips of kindergarten through 3rd grade classes. I showed the students the beaver damage and the beaver fence. They got to witness how my orchard is successfully co-existing with the beavers in our area. When some of these students would come back to my orchard as a upick customer, they would delight in pointing out to their family members the reason for the fence.

I am relieved to have found a humane way to deal with my wildlife issue. I am very grateful for the support of the grant program.

I am a good advertisement for a successful solution to co-existing with Beavers. I am the only Upick apple orchard in this area and all of my customers and students are thankful I still have apple trees for them to pick and enjoy.

I support the Landowners Living with Beaver grant fund program. It will raise awareness of humane ways to co-exist with beavers. It will also help landowners, like me, with financial help and resources to install non-lethal mitigation tools. Please support funding for this bill 4014.