



**THINK  
WILD**



Think Wild  
62410 Erickson Rd.  
Bend, OR 97701  
[www.thinkwildco.org](http://www.thinkwildco.org)  
Tax ID: 46-2360867

February 5, 2024

Dear House Climate, Energy and Environment Committee,

We are Think Wild, a non-profit wildlife education, conservation, and rehabilitation center located in Bend, Oregon. We provide rescue and rehabilitation for injured and orphaned native wildlife throughout Central Oregon and work to educate the community about wildlife conservation through our wildlife hotline, education programs, mitigation services, and restoration work.

We are writing this letter in support of HB 4014 - Landowners Living with Beaver Grant Program Fund. Providing funding to private landowners to explore non-lethal conflict mitigation strategies with beavers on their lands will be beneficial to humans, beavers, and wildlife in Oregon. Successful coexistence with beavers improves riparian habitat connectivity for native species and improves our region's resistance to the effects of climate change.

Central and Eastern Oregon riparian landscapes are beset by environmental issues: wildfires, drought, rising water temperatures, invasive species, and a history of harmful land use practices, which threaten habitat for not only fish and wildlife, but also for humans. Research supports that the presence of beavers, and their activity in stream ecosystems, lead to improved habitat for fish, wildlife, and native plants, as well as increased drought, flood, and fire tolerance.

Beaver activity in riparian habitats has a beneficial effect on many native Oregon plant and animal species, many of whom are identified strategy species from the Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS). The ponds formed by beaver damming provide more stable habitat for fish like Westslope Cutthroat Trout, amphibians such as Columbia Spotted Frogs, Inland Tailed Frogs, and Western Toads, reptiles such as Western Painted Turtles, and mammals such as river otters, mink, and muskrats, all of whom depend on year-round water availability to survive.

Beaver ponds also collect debris like twigs, sediments, and leaf litter, which form habitat for aquatic invertebrates such as Columbia Clubtail larvae and other insects and larvae, Western Ridged Mussels and other mollusks, worms, and crustaceans. Aquatic invertebrates are a crucial food source for fish, amphibians, and waterfowl like the Trumpeter Swan. Additionally, flying insects supported by beaver ponds provide food for Townsend's Big-eared Bats and Fringed Myotis, Lewis' Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatchers, and other songbirds.

The moisture retained by beaver dams supports plant diversity - rare plants like the Arrowleaf Thelypody and Oregon Semaphore Grass that depend on riparian habitats grow well in sites with beaver activity. Native plants such as these in turn support populations of native pollinators, herbivores, and omnivores. Grasses, rushes, cattails and other marshland plants offer shelter, nesting,



**THINK  
WILD**



Think Wild  
62410 Erickson Rd.  
Bend, OR 97701  
[www.thinkwildco.org](http://www.thinkwildco.org)  
Tax ID: 46-2360867

and brood areas for birds. Riparian trees and shrubs supply forage and refuge for big game, songbirds, and upland game birds like Greater Sage Grouse and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Human coexistence with beaver populations will also help address many Key Conservation Issues in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. Riparian habitats with successful beaver populations are less susceptible to fire danger, drought conditions, and flooding, all of which have increased in frequency and severity due to global climate change. Water moves more slowly through meandering wetlands, ponds, and oxbows that form with increased beaver activity, which increases time for sedimentation and filtration as it travels, positively affecting water quality downstream of beaver-impacted habitat. Better management of beaver populations would allow their positive impacts in a wider range of Oregon habitats, increasing the resilience of these regions to climate change-related threats.

The passing of HB 3464 set the stage for landowners to consider non-lethal mitigation options for conflicts with beavers. Passing HB 4104 would provide crucial funding to develop and support these strategies. Think Wild's Beaver Works program has spent the past 5 years working with private landholders and other land management organizations to develop non-lethal beaver conflict mitigation strategies that are better long-term solutions for all stakeholders. This bill would allow Think Wild and other organizations to better implement these strategies and establish successful beaver habitat solutions on private lands.

We implore you to support the passing of HB 4014 to serve the people of Oregon, its wildlife, and its ecosystems. We believe this bill is a great step in the direction of increasing climate resiliency and improving riparian habitats in our state. Oregon is the Beaver State - it's time to recognize beavers as the ecosystem engineers they are and manage their populations in ways that allow them to fulfill this vital role.

Sincerely,

Sally Compton  
Executive Director  
Think Wild Central Oregon  
[sally@thinkwildco.org](mailto:sally@thinkwildco.org)

Maureen Thompson, PhD  
Beaver Works Program Manager  
Think Wild Central Oregon  
[maureen@thinkwildco.org](mailto:maureen@thinkwildco.org)