



February 3, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 3143 – Landowners Living with Beaver Grant Fund

TO: House Committee of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Water

The Wetlands Conservancy is a 42-year-old land trust with a mission to conserve and steward Oregon's wetlands in partnership with communities. We are the only statewide organization focused on wetland health and wetland function and are landowners in six unique counties, owning and stewarding over 2000 acres of wetland habitat across Oregon from the Portland metro area to the central and southern Oregon coast.

Beavers are a keystone species in creating, restoring and maintaining healthy wetland habitats, a vital component to a climate resilient Oregon. Beaver enhanced wetlands provide flood protection, drought relief, wildfire mitigation, improved water quality, and healthy fish and wildlife populations.

Conflicts do arise when beaver ponds begin to impair human infrastructure and as a landowner we encounter this frequently. TWC's Cedar Mill wetland, a 16 acre beaver managed wetland near Cedar Hills Oregon swells seasonally into a series of ephemeral ponds that provide habitat for 4 important amphibians and has become an E-Bird hotspot due to the amount of bird activity year-round. Unfortunately, between 2019 and 2021, one of the beavers' favorite dams kept blocking the entrance to a large culvert under highway 26 and causing high water levels close to a neighboring apartment building. When the dam was removed, they started rebuilding it inside the culvert, forcing PBOT employees into the dangerous position of entering the culvert to break up the dam. In 2021, TWC installed a flow device at the culvert's opening and, since then, the beavers have rebuilt a strong and enduring dam over top of the device. Water levels alongside the apartment complex's property line have remained stable and the beavers are free to continue retaining water and creating habitat for more wildlife.

This example illustrates the benefit of co-existence devices, and HB 3143 would provide funding for landowners to pursue non-lethal and non-extractive methods to co-exist. In 2023, ODFW developed a 3-year Beaver Action Plan that aims to advance restoration of beaver habitats and includes private lands. Financial assistance will support landowners in advancing the Plan's goals, yet there have been no funds allocated for this purpose. In 2023, the legislature passed HB 3464, which removed the predatory animal status of beavers and shifted management on private lands from the Department of Agriculture to ODFW. This opened an opportunity to provide an alternative to beaver extermination. Landowners now need resources to shift historical management practices.

The Wetlands Conservancy asks for your support on HB 3143 on behalf of all of Oregon's wetlands.

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