



National Headquarters

1130 17th Street, N.W. | Washington, D.C. 20036-4604 | tel 202.682.9400 | fax 202.682.1331
www.defenders.org

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

February 5, 2024

Re: HB 3143 (Landowners Living with Beavers Grant Program)

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice Chair Finger McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Colin Reynolds. I am the Senior Advisor to the Northwest Program at Defenders of Wildlife (“Defenders”). Defenders is a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities, with over 40,000 members and supporters in Oregon. On behalf of Defenders, I am submitting the following comments in support of HB 3143.

This bill would establish the “Landowners Living with Beavers Grant Program” (“Beaver Grant Program”) that would award grants to implement coexistence projects on private land. This bill would also establish reporting requirements and appropriate \$1.5 million to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation fund for purposes related to the Beaver Grant Program.

Coexisting with wildlife is integral to Defenders’ mission, and we have been at the forefront of coexistence efforts for decades across the United States including currently supporting a beaver cost-share program in Northern New Mexico.ⁱ We believe properly designed, funded, and implemented community-based coexistence programs can work to reduce instances of human-wildlife conflict, and we are excited to support the creation and funding of the Beaver Grant Program.

Defenders believes the Beaver Grant Program will bring positive impacts to Oregonians. Recent studies have shown that beavers can help mitigate the risks of heat,ⁱⁱ drought,ⁱⁱⁱ and fire.^{iv} Recent studies have also shown that the presence of beavers also helps other wildlife in areas where beavers reside,^v providing ponds and wetlands for endangered species filtered of pollution.^{vi}

Defenders commends the legislature for its previous work removing beavers from the predatory animal statute on private lands.^{vii} Now designated as furbearers, private landowners will have more opportunities to coexist with beavers and consider implementing non-lethal mitigation tools, including tree protection tools, flood prevention devices, and culvert and infrastructure protection systems. Implementing these mitigation tools requires technical capacity and expertise that a landowner may not possess. HB 3143

would help address both: the bill's financial appropriation can help alleviate the financial burden of procuring these tools and the bill also allows for funds to be used to build our state's capacity in providing technical assistance to landowners.

HB 3143 can support the implementation of the Oregon's "3-Year Action Plan for Beaver-Modified Landscapes"^{viii} by creating coexistence opportunities on private lands and amplifying the ecosystem services beavers provide. Defenders commends the legislature for its attention to this issue and we ask that it supports this work by passing HB 3143..

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Reynolds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Colin Reynolds

Senior Advisor, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife

ⁱ *Traditional Farming Communities Coexist with Beavers*, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE (April 6, 2022), <https://defenders.org/blog/2022/04/traditional-farming-communities-coexist-beavers>.

ⁱⁱ Benjamin Dittbrenner, et. al., *Relocated beaver can increase water storage and decrease stream temperature in headwater streams*, ECOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.4168>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Benji Jones, *Beavers are Heat Wave Heroes*, VOX (July 12, 2023), <https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/23273240/heat-wave-beavers-climate-change>. (“Beavers also provide insurance against droughts, by helping replenish the groundwater that humans rely on.”).

^{iv} Emily Farifax & Andrew Whittle, *Smokey the Beaver: beaver-dammed riparian corridors stay green during wildfire throughout the western United States*, ECOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2225>.

^v Fedyn, Izabela, et. al., *Beyond beaver wetlands: The engineering activities of a semi-aquatic mammal mediate the species richness and abundance of terrestrial birds wintering in a temperate forest*, FOREST ECOLOGY & MGMT. (2023), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378112722006922>.

^{vi} Goldfarb, Ben, *Spying on Beavers From Space Could Help Save California*, WIRED (Dec. 28, 2023), <https://www.wired.com/story/spying-on-beavers-from-space-could-help-save-california/>.

^{vii} H.B. 3634 (2023), <https://apps.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Measures/Overview/HB3464>.

^{viii} ODFW’s 3-Year Action Plan for Beaver-Modified Landscapes, OREGON DEP’T OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (June 16, 2023), https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/minutes/23/06_Jun/ODFW_3YBeaverHabitatActionPlan_Final_20230616.pdf.