



A coordinated, grassroots effort supporting landowners and beavers on Eastern Oregon landscapes.

February 21, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 354 Testimony in Opposition of SB 354 - Relating to relocating beavers

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire,

I am writing on behalf of the Western Beavers Cooperative, a grassroots organization dedicated to supporting beavers and landowners in Eastern Oregon. Our mission combines scientific expertise, extensive field experience, and volunteer efforts to collaborate with diverse stakeholders, including private and public landowners, natural resource agencies, and academic researchers. Together, we aim to apply science-based best practices to create conditions conducive to the success of beavers east of the Cascade Mountains.

Over the past 6 years and 7,000+ hours of field observations and monitoring, our crews have surveyed Eastern Oregon public and private lands beaver streams distributed throughout the Oregon counties of: Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Lake, Harney, Malheur, Jefferson, Wasco and Gilliam.

We strongly oppose House Bill 354, which proposes the translocation of beavers within Oregon. While the intent behind this bill may be to address human-beaver conflicts while promoting ecological benefits and watershed resilience, our first-hand experiences with beaver relocation (relayed here: <https://westernbeavers.org/why-we-dont-relocate-beavers/>), conversations with landowners and wildlife services, and extensive research review indicates that both beaver relocation (within a home range) and translocation (to an altogether new range) is both ineffective and inhumane.

Adopting beaver translocation as a tool to advance Eastern Oregon stream enhancement and ecology is short-sighted and fails to address the basic, essential conditions that beavers actually need to be successful on these landscapes.

Studies and firsthand accounts reveal these specific concerns and statistics regarding beaver relocation and translocation:

1. High Mortality Rates and Low Success in New Habitats

[\(View this web page for published reports and the “Beaver Relocation Math”\)](#)

- **Capture Mortality:** The use of live traps, such as the Hancock trap, can result in injury or death upon capture. In the published reports datasets that we’ve reviewed, 7 in 12 reported capture mortality.

- **Handling and Captivity Mortality:** Beavers are susceptible to stress-related complications during handling and captivity. In the published reports datasets that we've reviewed, 5 in 12 reported captivity mortality.
- **Post-Release Site Fidelity:** After release, post-monitoring shows across Westerns states that only 25% to 35% of relocated beavers remain at the intended site. Many leave in search of more suitable conditions, facing increased risks of predation and starvation during their journey.

These figures underscore the low success rates of translocation efforts and highlight the significant risks posed to the beavers involved.

2. Ineffectiveness in Addressing Human-Beaver Conflicts

Removing beavers from a particular area does not provide a long-term solution to conflicts. Vacated habitats often attract new beavers, with studies showing that approximately 75% of such sites are reoccupied within two years. Instead of repeated relocations, implementing conflict mitigation strategies—such as installing flow devices to manage water levels or protective measures for trees—offers more sustainable and humane solutions.

3. Risk of Disease Transmission

Relocating beavers can inadvertently facilitate the spread of diseases, including cryptosporidium, tularemia, plague, and listeriosis, between relocated and resident beaver populations. Such disease transmission poses significant health risks to wildlife and potentially to humans.

4. Relocation Causes Trauma and Family Disruption

Beavers are highly social animals with complex family structures. Relocating beavers involves capturing and handling, processes that are inherently stressful, traumatic and sometimes lethal for these shy creatures. Attempts to live-trap entire families often result in separation, as capturing all members is challenging. Such disruptions can lead to the breakdown of family units, adversely affecting their survival and well-being.

Conclusion

Given the documented challenges and ethical concerns associated with beaver translocation, we urge the legislature to reject House Bill 354. We advocate for alternative, science-based approaches that prioritize conflict mitigation and habitat enhancement, while allowing beavers to continue being beavers with all of the ecological and watershed resilience their activities bring, and without the adverse impacts to their populations at large, and the welfare of beaver individuals and family units caused by relocation.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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