



National Headquarters

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House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

March 21, 2025

Re: HB 3932 (Relating to protecting beavers)

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Levy and Gamba, 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 3932.

HB 3932 would require the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules that prohibit a person from taking a beaver for recreational or commercial purposes within 200 feet of impaired watersheds identified by the Department of Environmental Quality (“DEQ”) on public land. This bill would not infringe or prohibit federal or state land management employees from relocating or taking beavers to address damage or imminent threats to infrastructure. That said, this bill does recommend federal or state land management employees employ nonlethal coexistence measures, such as fencing to protect culverts and placing flow control devices to control water levels in beaver ponds, before resulting to relocating or taking beavers.

Unfortunately, over 100,000 miles of Oregon’s waterways are impaired; they have too high a temperature, have too much sedimentation, and/or have too many toxins. DEQ is required to restore these waterways, but to do so requires significant resources to design and implement plans to reduce this pollution. Fortunately, beavers, also known as “nature’s engineers,” can help. By constructing dams, they can trap pollutants from a variety of urban, industrial and agricultural sources while filtering water as it crosses through the dam. Reducing pollution is not the only benefit beavers can bring to the environment; recent studies have shown that beavers can help mitigate the risks of heat,ⁱ drought,ⁱⁱ and fire.ⁱⁱⁱ Moreover, studies have also shown that the presence of beavers also helps other wildlife in areas where beavers reside,^{iv} providing ponds and wetlands for endangered species filtered of pollution.^v

Because of the targeted approach of this bill – only preventing beaver take within 200 feet of impaired watersheds on public land – its impacts on beaver harvest are limited.

According to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, only 4% of reported beaver harvest occurs on the lands subject to this bill.

Allowing beavers to do this work on and beside impaired waterways on public lands is good for the environment and good public policy, as it allows DEQ to focus on restoring other impaired waterways in other parts of the state. This bill is as innovative as it is smart and Defenders could not be more supportive.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully request you support HB 3932.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Reynolds', written in a cursive style.

Colin Reynolds

Senior Advisor, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife

ⁱ 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>.

ⁱⁱ 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.”).

ⁱⁱⁱ 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>.

^{iv} 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>.

^v 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/>.