

Submitter: Jennifer Starkey

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3932

Dear Chair Rep. Lively, Rep. Vice-Chair Gamba, Rep. Vice-Chair Levy and members of the committee,

I am the Education Director at the Columbia Slough Watershed Council and I have run the free education program Slough School for 9 years. This program provides free lessons and field trips about our local ecologies in the Slough's watershed to Title I schools from St Johns to Fairview and Gresham. It is through this lens that I ask you to please support HB 3932 so we can allow beavers to help restore Oregon's thousands of miles of impaired waterways for free, and students in this highly urbanized watershed can learn from it!

The Slough is in one of the most industrialized parts of our entire state and was a heavily abused waterway up until 30 years ago, when local laws began prohibiting the dumping of sewage and industrial pollution into the Slough's channels. In the past 30 years, we have seen improved water quality and wildlife return to find habitat in a place that has been home to so many plants, animals, and people since time immemorial. One of these animals is: beavers!

As I'm sure you have heard, beavers help slow water flow, restore impacted water tables and underground aquifers, create natural wetlands that filter toxins, and create wildlife and fish habitat at the same time. Urban beavers have moved into the City of Gresham's Stormwater Treatment Facility on NE 184th & Sandy Blvd. I just ran 6 field trips for 5th graders where students were able to see a beaver lodge up close, touch beaver chewed trees, and then test the temperature, turbidity, pH, and dissolved oxygen of stormwater that has flowed through a dam. The data that the students collected was really exciting, it showed how effective the dam was at slowing down the polluted stormwater, sending out much clearer water into the Slough.

Almost half of all of Oregon's streams and rivers suffer from poor water quality. That's over 100,000 miles of waterways! The Department of Environmental Quality is tasked with restoring these waterways but lacks the resources to do this at the scale needed. This is where beavers can help.

Passing HB 3932 would allow beavers to help restore these waterways by closing hunting and trapping of beavers on these impaired waterways on public lands. There is robust scientific evidence that shows beaver dam complexes can address most of

the water quality issues of concern. This bill is NOT about limiting beaver harvest and increasing beaver population. Instead, this bill would enable beavers to access waterways where they need to be and remain long enough to perform their ecosystem functions without getting trapped out.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Starkey  
Education Director  
Columbia Slough Watershed Council