

Date: March 18, 2021



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
900 Court Street, Salem OR

RE: *Testimony in Support of HB2844- Provides, for purposes of certain statutes relating to taking of predatory animals, that terms "predatory animal" and "rodent" do not include beavers*

Chair Witt and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders), I am submitting the following comments **in support of HB2844**, which dissociates the terms “predatory animal” and “rodent” from beaver and therefore influences beaver management in the state. Defenders, with nearly 2.2 million supporters nationwide, is a national wildlife conservation organization that aims to protect imperiled and native species and their habitats. On behalf of our nearly 33,000 members in Oregon, I urge the Committee to support this bill so our state’s fish and wildlife agency and its Commission can make critical decisions and set parameters on the management of the species in a way that will benefit our natural ecosystems and the health and well-being of Oregonians.

As a science-led conservation organization, we rely on scientific evidence and literature to inform us on species conservation and management. The “predatory” status of beavers is not driven by science or biology. Beavers are known herbivores sticking largely to a diet of plants, grasses, woody shrubs and trees. They are classified as “predators” in Oregon simply because they fall in the Order Rodentia of the animal classification system, which has the largest number of species within mammals. The “rodent” classification of beavers is based on its biology and anatomical similarities with other species in that Order, and not because of its food habits. Oregon’s current misidentification of beavers as “predator” has serious implications -- the primary one being that there is no monitoring or management strategy developed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) since the agency is not responsible for the species. As the state’s leading wildlife agency, it does not make sense to not have ODFW be the lead on managing our wildlife.

The bill directs the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules governing the taking of beavers and the ODFW to publish data related to takings of beavers on an annual basis that is available to the public. Concerns on landowners’ ability to manage their property and beavers that live on them is misplaced and not valid as this bill does not exclude the take of beavers. It simply empowers ODFW to scientifically monitor and manage the species that will ensure the long term sustainability of the beaver population in the state and the ecosystem services these animals provide to us all. This is not unique to beavers -- ODFW does it for all

species under its management. However, because beavers hold a “predator” status in Oregon, to date, has no data on beaver population in the state. Without such data it is impossible to determine sustainable harvest limits, which in turn, has a significant impact on the long term viability of the population.

Defenders recognizes beavers are nature’s engineers and our key allies for maintaining and restoring habitat. As well-documented in the peer-reviewed scientific literature and ODFW reports, this keystone species increases and diversifies habitat and its connectivity to the benefit of many species and provides essential ecosystem services to the benefit of human communities, recreation and livelihoods. The ecosystem services that beavers provide are many and include stream rehabilitation, maintaining and increasing stream flows, decreasing flood peaks and intensity that are critical to the resiliency of both human and wildlife communities and survival and growth of endangered fish stocks. For these reasons, we strongly support the provisions and amendments in HB2844 because together, they ensure that the state’s agencies are making sound science and data- based decisions on management of the beaver population in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns (Sristi Kamal skamal@defenders.org)

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sristi Kamal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sristi Kamal, Ph.D.
Senior NW Representative
Defenders of Wildlife
Portland, Oregon