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February 15, 2021

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Testimony, support for HB 2844

Chair Witt, Representative Marsh, Representative Hudson, Representative Nosse, Representative Neron, Representative Reynolds, Representative Wilde, Representative Breese Iverson, and Members of the Committee,

Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) supports HB 2844. It directs the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) to reclassify beavers from the current predatory animal and rodent categories that fail to protect beavers from lethal removal year-round, and pursue beaver management on private lands, encouraging non-lethal removal methods for nuisance animals. It further directs the OFWC to adopt rules for taking of beavers, publish an annual report and make it available to the public.

LandWatch is a conservation organization with more than 35 years of protection of Central Oregon’s beautiful forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and our vibrant communities. We work to conserve the region’s ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and working rural lands balanced with a responsible, sustainable approach to planning and fostering thriving communities.

On behalf of LandWatch, we ask that you pass HB2844 to address the current laws and rules for managing beavers. With endorsement of our Executive Director, Ben Gordon, and as a board member of Central Oregon LandWatch, we support this bill since it directs the reclassification of beaver as a predator and rodent to a classification that supports restoration of this species.

Beavers are the archetype of a keystone species by creating and restoring riparian and wetland ecosystems which are critical for the health of fish and wildlife habitats and their native species. In an equally important role, beavers and their abilities to store water behind small naturally made dams, raise water tables in riparian areas and wetlands, capture sediment, increase water quality and summertime base flows, moderate flood events and help restore groundwater aquifers. The consequences to mankind are a multitude of benefits that help to grow agricultural crops and livestock, provide drinking water for towns and cities, improve perennial flows in rivers and streams during drought conditions, and reduce flooding. As Oregon progressively experiences the effects of a warmer and drier environment due to climate change, the improved riparian and wetland functions that beavers create will moderate flooding and drought impacts from more frequent storm events,



sequester carbon, and increase the connectivity of fragmented waterways for fish and wildlife species.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and for your consideration of our support for HB 2844.

Respectfully,

/Amy M. Stuart/ electronic signature

Amy Stuart

Board Member, Central Oregon LandWatch

Retired, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, ODFW

