

My name is Michael Krochta, and I am the Forest Watch Coordinator for Bark, a Portland-based non-profit dedicated to defending and restoring forests surrounding Mt. Hood. We participate in the NEPA process for activities proposed on the Mt. Hood National Forest, participate in all 3 forest collaborative groups in our area (Wasco, Hood River, and Clackamas counties), and offer several programs to engage and connect people with the tools needed to participate in public lands decisions. Lastly, we are involved in a beaver and wetlands habitat restoration project on the Mt. Hood National Forest.

We believe that beaver are a necessary component for Oregon's ecological health, and specifically within the geographic area that we work. Some benefits of restoring beaver populations to their former range include increased wildfire resilience, increased water security through wetlands and ponds storing surface and groundwater, carbon capture and storage, improved drinking water quality and stream temperatures, and improved rearing habitat for multiple imperiled salmonid species. HB 2844 encourages beaver presence on the landscape to create an atmosphere where Oregon sees more benefits from increased, and more widely-distributed beaver populations in Oregon. This includes public lands where we work, since we are likely to see more beaver reintroductions to areas that need them, if this bill passes.

If the predatory animal status is removed for beaver, this would allow Oregon's wildlife experts, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, to manage beaver everywhere in Oregon as it does for the vast majority of wildlife in Oregon, including deer, elk, black bear, wolves, raccoons, fish, and others. The bill encourages the use of non-lethal co-existence tools to prevent beaver-related property and infrastructure damage. But it does not remove any tools from the toolbox for landowners in Oregon, as lethal removal of beaver is still an option, and would not preclude the Oregon Department of Agriculture from working with landowners to protect their property, crops, and infrastructure.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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