

March 18, 2021

Afternoon Chair Witt, Vice Chair Breese Iverson, and members of the committee,

For the record, I'm Mark Gourley-Professional Certified Forester, 43 years working in Western Oregon Forests from the Pacific Ocean to the crest of the Oregon Cascades. I've walked through and fallen down in Oregon Forests more than any other Oregonian. I'm here today to testify in opposition to HB 2488.

The first issue I'd like to clarify is that we, as landowners, are not interested in eliminating beavers from the landscape. It's not possible. We recognize that in the right locations and habitats, beavers can productively contribute to a wide variety of ecosystem benefits. But at the same time beavers in the wrong locations can cause extensive riparian damage. Their dams can block culverts, wash out critical roads, flood farm fields, home and parks, and alter water systems that our Oregon families rely upon for their farms, forests, and infrastructure. There is no other way to define these negative implications for a landowner or resource manager other than damage.

ORS 610.055 sets it to be policy of the state of Oregon that appropriate measures must be taken to assist farmers, ranchers, and others in resolving wildlife damage problems. There is a broad range of animals that fall within a definition of "predatory animal" because it specifically relates to critters that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products, and activities. The statutes that govern how that damage is addressed reside within the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture, because that agency has the tools, resources, cooperative agreements and personnel to help land managers deal with this aspect of their work. Simply put, beavers are correctly defined as predatory animals for purposes of meeting ORS 610.55.

More importantly, there is no scientific body of evidence that shows landowners managing beavers under the provisions of our current laws has a negative impact on their overall populations.

To the points of the bill requiring a permit before removal, non-lethal measures or relocation there are multiple problems. First, there are not adequate resources at ODFW to assist landowners with this work in a timely fashion. When a beaver plugs a culvert or road crossing, the potential for road wash out and

downstream sedimentation becomes imminent. Second, over my forestry career, physical barriers and piping around culverts have never worked.

Further, since Spring/Summer 2000, Dr. Jimmy Taylor and Vanessa Petro, scientists with Oregon State University, have demonstrated that relocating urban problem beavers to the best salmonid habitat of the Siuslaw National Forest just didn't work. Prime salmon stream habitat was already fully occupied by bank denning beaver. Established family beaver colonies don't allow newcomers, and cougars eat transplanted beavers who don't have established homes.

Again, there is no scientific basis to make these changes. The bill is a solution in search of a problem. It will only accomplish more red tape, confusion, and future risk to hard working Oregonians who simply want to grow their products, provide services for their communities, and be the best stewards of these lands as possible.