

Oppose HB 2844

The cruelest thing we can do is failing to responsibly manage wildlife!

The Oregon Trappers Association (OTA) represents Oregon's original furbearer conservationists. Our small 550-member conservation organization was formed in 1972 by a core group of citizen trappers from all corners of Oregon with the sole purpose of protecting our fish and wildlife resources and our trapping heritage. In 1980, Oregon's fur harvesters were under a direct and vicious attack at the ballot box, very much like we are today. It is true, that our numbers are few, and that many say our conservation-based privileges and outdoor skills are no longer needed or relevant to modern society or that we are relics of a past that should be cast aside and cancelled. Cancelling certain cultures and cancelling history seems to be the favored course of action for the anti-this and anti-that movement sweeping across America today. Oregon's and the nation's trappers and fur harvesters are a cultural minority, and we are arguably your most nature-connected constituents. As pragmatists, we could not disagree more with the "Reimagining Wildlife Governance" animal rights movement that has much to our chagrin, become laser focused on furbearer and predator management.

Before you today is House Bill 2844, sponsored by Representative Marsh and Senator Gorsek, that proposes to amend Oregon Revised Statutes 498.012 and 610.002. Both wildlife damage management statutes were designed and codified by your past legislative colleagues for the specific purposes of efficiently and effectively managing human and wildlife conflicts. Wildlife and human conflicts occur daily across a state as geographically diverse as Oregon. Oregon's abundant wildlife that inhabits what is often referred to as the urban or rural interface can and do cause unimaginable and costly damage ranging from power transmission poles being gnawed down in Harney County, newly planted hazelnut trees being felled in Benton County, newborn lambs being killed in Umatilla County and lake-front habitat degradation in Clackamas County. The necessity for animal damage management is a factual reality that is very often misunderstood by a modern society that is rapidly becoming disconnected with nature.

Beaver are nature's engineers; they are an ecologically and culturally important species and have been taxonomically classified as a rodent. They sometimes, unfortunately, cause damage. This is fact. The fiction is that some believe that beavers are so ecologically important that they should be legislatively removed from statutes that have established an orderly and cost-effective damage management system. It is also fiction, and unsupported by science, that regulated beaver harvest by licensed trappers or wildlife damage control agents is causing an ecologically significant decline to Oregon's abundant beaver population. Fact: the science just does not exist that supports the immediate need to amend ORS 498.012 or ORS 610.

The Oregon Trappers Association and Oregon's Wildlife Control agents are more than willing to have a more in-depth discussion regarding the emerging and highly contentious state-wide

beaver management issue with all interested citizens. This is exactly the reason why the Oregon Trapper Association has accepted an invitation to participate in the Beaver Management Work Group being established by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. It only seems reasonable for Wildlife Governance to follow a more collaborative and inclusive review process that openly and objectively examines all aspects of beaver management, which is what the Oregon Trappers Association believes the Beaver Management Work Group will be best positioned to accomplish.

The Oregon Trappers Association requests that you, as our elected representatives, allow the Beaver Management Work Group to guide your decisions on what the best management practices are for Oregon's state animal and **oppose HB 2844**. The Oregon Trappers Association believes that a more reasonable outcome for beaver management and all concerned Oregonians would be a legislative action that allows ODFW's Beaver Management Work Group the time and resources to complete their work and bring back to an upcoming interim session of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee pertinent information regarding the need to change or not change the beaver's animal damage management status contained in ORS 498.012 and ORS 610.002. We believe that all objective and rational policy making processes must not be hastily done, must be inclusive of all societal interests and, most importantly, rely on the best available science to guide the discussion, not emotion.

Thank you,

The Oregon Trappers Association - Board of Directors

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