

My name is Lyle Spiesschaert and I am a fourth generation Oregon Farmer on our century farm at 3150 NW Thatcher Road in Forest Grove, OR 97116. I and my brother and nephew farm approximately 400 acres of turf-type grass for seed; crimson and red clover for seed; soft white wheat for grain; heritage grains for malting, brewing and distilling; and corn for silage. I was born 75 years ago on the same farm I currently live on. I have seen a lot of changes during my lifetime.

During those early years I participated in a changing farming scenario that transitioned from basically a sustainable footprint to one that relied heavily on tillage; chemicals; tilling, irrigation, modern machinery, etc. Due to my father's love of horses he continued to farm with horses until his death in 1984. His philosophy of balancing the old with the new instilled in me a desire to balance the modern techniques with the age old proven ones. In the insuring years after his death our farm adopted all of the latest university proven ways to increase production and reduce labor. We were tilling the soil right to the stream banks, removing riparian strips, taking out fence rows, draining fields, and adding all forms of chemical control. As a result our production increased, however at the expense of wildlife and pollinator decline, dependency on expensive inputs, increased erosion, soil compaction, etc.

Then almost two decades ago we began a restoration project called Enhanced Conservation Reserve Program. We planted a native vegetation corridor along over one mile of upper Council Creek. The purpose was to cool the water and filter runoff for fish habitat. It has been very successful, enough so that for the first time in my lifetime beavers have returned to make the 15+ acres of this corridor their home. For the past decade beaver families have made their homes along the densely populated stream. They have found the native plants to be ideal habitat to grow and thrive. Since that time I and they have endeavored to find a balance between what they need and want and what I need and want to be a successful farmer.

PROBELMS: There are obvious downsides that affect my agricultural practices. The most obvious is backing up the water behind their dams and flooding agricultural lands. In addition they are cutting trees for food and structural material thereby diminishing the corridor. Flooding also causes certain native species to die from constantly being under water. Backing up flowing water threatens the field road system especially as it related to damming bridges and culverts. They also threaten to prevent field drainage from mine and my neighbors fields.

BENEFITS: By holding back the stream, the beavers are slowing down the runoff allowing water to penetrate the aquifer. This also helps to sub irrigate adjacent fields. It also retains a significant pool of water for waterfowl and other aquatic animals. The beavers presence creates a broader and much more diverse eco system

MANAGEMENT: After a decade of managing the beavers it is my belief that we are best served by a management system that we farmers and the beavers can co-exist when feasible in a mutually beneficial manner. We currently use dam lowering devices: dam reduction and dam lowering practices; earlier we trapped and relocated; and limiting certain sources of food. Complete irradiation of the beavers does not seem feasible or fit in with our beneficial outcomes.

Therefore, I believe in my case it may be best to continue a management plan that allows the beavers to stay and thrive and at the same time allow my family to farm the adjacent land. This requires a concerted effort between private landowners; Soil & Water Districts; Consultants; various State and Federal Governments and Organizations and the public citizenry.

I do believe that if we are to protect the future of farming, we must think more holistic and not concentrate only on our immediate desires or goals. The response should be one that couples education, assistance and regulation to achieve these common goals.

We need as much clarification from regulators as possible. I believe that HB 3464 will clarify the role of the Department of Forestry and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. It further provides for clear language on "how many" and "where" beavers are killed in Oregon. This seems straight forward enough to accommodate the various ideals under which private landowners operate. It allows enough pause and protection to help us think what the best approach might be. I especially like the "instructs the ODFW personnel to prioritize efforts that help inform landowners of non-lethal coexistence strategies..."

This piece of legislation seems minimal in providing for management of the beavers in a co-existence strategy of balance between profit and benefits to our environment and more importantly our future existence.

Please add my voice of support to this reasonable legislation.

Sincerely,

Lyle Spiesschaert

SPIESSCHAERT FARMS

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