

Submitter: Kendra Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure: HB3464

Having worked in water quality, watershed and river restoration for more than two and half decades in Oregon, I can attest there is no better tool in our arsenal to combat climate change impacts on water quality and quantity, than allowing beaver to thrive along our waterways. The restoration work implemented in the Tualatin and Willamette basins, as well as the Rogue, Umpqua, John Day and Deschutes have proven, beaver are highly effective watershed engineers and are a critical keystone species. They rewet the floodplains, provide healthy pond environments for juvenile salmonids and other fish, waterfowl and wildlife, and facilitate the remeandering of streams by utilizing former side channels. The restoration of hyporheic (local ground water flow) caused by beaver dams is critical to providing cold water refugia, especially in eastside streams where the fish and amphibians need all the help they can get from rising water temperatures.

In the Tualatin, it was only after we (my employer Clean Water Services) requested APHIS stop trapping the native wildlife (and instead asked them to focus on nonnative species like nutria) that we began to turn the tide on water quality and floodplain restoration. That system has been transformed, from one of deeply degraded channels to one that largely supports wetland complexes and more healthy streams than were present decades ago. And while not every dam is considered a blessing by landowners, we do have strategies that manage challenging site conditions, without the physical loss of the beaver and the habitat they create.

I urge you to support any and all bills that help restore this critical species to our watersheds and help us to combat the water quality and habitat impacts we face today and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration
Kendra Smith, Ecologist