



Re: HB 3464 Support

Chair Marsh and committee members,

Please accept this written testimony in lieu of the oral testimony we planned to provide during the March 22nd hearing in support of HB 3464. For the record, I am Bethany Cotton, fifth generation Oregonian from Representative Marsh's district. I am also Conservation Director for Cascadia Wildlands. Cascadia Wildlands defends and restores Cascadia's wild ecosystems. Cascadia Wildlands is a founding member of the Oregon Wildlife Coalition and incorporates the coalition comments here by reference. We, on behalf of our 12,000 members and supporters, strongly support HB 3464. I do in my personal capacity as well.

I grew up on 1,680 acres of land in rural Southern Oregon where beavers are native and should exist, but remain absent due to anthropogenic extirpation. That land, which I continue to regularly visit and which is now under a conservation easement, would benefit from the myriad ecosystem services that beavers provide. That fact is true across Oregon's landscapes.

Beavers are a natural climate solution. They provide ecosystems services for free that are extremely expensive when replicated by humans, including water retention, natural wildfire breaks, and habitat creation and maintenance for salmonids and other aquatic species. Beaver presence makes stream and wetland habitats more resilient to short term weather and climate events. As Oregon experiences more intense summer heat, drought and larger and hotter-burning wildfires, the ecosystem services beavers provide become all the more essential. It is incredibly short sighted – and expensive – to continue to fail to acknowledge their benefits in how our state manages beavers.

Beaver's current status as "predatory" is not biologically accurate. Beavers are herbivores. While they can do damage to trees, that is part of what makes them an ecosystem engineer. This bill does not prevent landowners from lethally taking beavers when that damage is untenable. This bill will allow ODFW to encourage non-lethal beaver management and track lethal beaver removal so that the agency has a better concept of the state's beaver population. Beavers being classified as furbearers on private land as well as public lands will help make management across land designations more consistent.

As you heard from the ODFW staffers who presented to the committee, the classification change this bill achieves will not burden the agency or private landowners. Systems are already in place for ODFW to manage beavers like they do other wildlife species. The agency will be

able to apply its current rapid response, free permit system to beavers like other furbearers on private lands.

Ultimately, the question in front of this committee is whether enough evidence exists that beavers help us mitigate climate change impacts and if the answer is yes, the logical next question is whether Oregon's beaver management is taking those positive impacts into account when developing management strategies? The hearing and written testimonies have presented ample scientific information to be able to answer yes to the first question. However, if beaver management stays with the Department of Agriculture and not with ODFW, the answer to the second question will remain no, to the detriment of beavers, habitat, wildfire and climate resilience for every Oregonian.

It is high time that we acknowledge the benefits beavers bring to the Beaver State and manage them accordingly. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Please advance HB 3464

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bethany Cotton".

Bethany Cotton,
Conservation Director
Cascadia Wildlands
Bethany@cascwild.org