

Submitter: Jeanine Moy  
On Behalf Of: Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources  
Measure: HB3464

Community support: The Vesper Meadow Education Program and Restoration Project are supportive of HB 3464, as it will aid our efforts in land and water restoration for the sake of (1) climate and fire resiliency, (2) Tribal partnership for first food restoration, (3) community building and education (4) wildlife habitat and rare species conservation. Through educational school field trips, student internships, scientific collaboration, volunteer work parties, and other community programming, we engage wide audiences across southern Oregon and around the State. This non-profit programming builds upon the Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve serving as a restoration demonstration site and education hub.

Restoring landscapes: At the Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve, approx 1000 acres in southwest Oregon, Latgawa Creek has undergone significant hydrologic alteration and degradation of native species' habitat in the last 200 years, since time of Western settlement. Causes for this degradation are common to most other Western waterways and are rooted in historic and ongoing livestock grazing, water diversion for irrigation, poorly-designed infrastructure, invasive species among other related issues. The widespread extirpation of beaver in the nineteenth century and current trapping of this ecological keystone species have significantly contributed to the loss of wetland function. Evidence of past beaver populations at Vesper Meadow is apparent by beaver-chew seen on woody debris as well as through oral histories told by local residents. The creation of an irrigation diversion structure in 1960 for the Talent Irrigation Ditch that was built below the channel elevations, plus the removal of riparian willow (c. 1970) by the previous owners has left the creek channel severely incised and vulnerable to continued head cutting and bank erosion. In effect, this has led to increased flashiness, decreased water storage capacity, prevented spring inundation of the meadow, and increased floodplain desiccation. The loss of beaver from the landscape has significantly degrade both drinking water quality and wildlife habitat. These issues are compounded by related impacts in the adjacent floodplain; soil compaction, invasion of non-native grasses, decline and loss of species, and changes to the meadow habitat structure and function.

For water quality: According to the Medford Water (Commission), Craig Harper describes "the greatest issues for the Little Butte Creek system are water quality-related – high turbidity and organics, along with high temperatures, bacteria, chemicals, etc. The greatest concerns are related to drought, decreasing snowpack, fire, adverse land use practices (and resultant runoff), and spills. Long term plans include ways to increase protection of the Big Butte Springs source, which provides

60-75% of the annual needs for 140,000+ people, and protection and enhancement of the surface water source, the Rogue River (of which this project will help address). Medford Water directly serves drinking water to Medford and White City, and we also provide “supplemental water” - most or all of the drinking water to Eagle Point, Central Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Talent, 2 small water districts, a few customers who draw directly from the Big Butte Springs pipelines, and even Ashland receives extra water from us in the summer.” Over the last several years, the Medford Water has begun to partner with restoration practitioners to implement watershed-wide projects that help address this issues to water quality.

HB3464 has the potential to aid in these important restoration efforts for water security, for wildlife habitat, and for climate resiliency - as a low cost option to achieve these goals, it's a no-brainer.

Thank you for your work on this bill, please see it through.