



# HB 3464 A: Enhancing Oregon's Fire Resiliency and Water Security through Beaver Management

**THE PROBLEM:** Beavers are classified as “predatory animal” on private lands in Oregon. As a result, beavers can be killed with little to no regulation or monitoring in the Beaver State.

## *Beavers: our allies against climate change impacts*

- Beaver-modified habitat enhances fire resiliency and creates climate refugia for other species.
- Beavers improve water security, sequesters carbon, and creates healthy habitat for salmon.
- Fewer beavers mean increased wildfire risk, less salmon habitat and decreased water security.
- For the above reasons, beavers are considered keystone species. If they are gone, other species will follow.

## *Why are beavers classified as “predatory?”*

- Beavers fall in the scientific order “rodentia” and under current Oregon law ORS 610, all rodents are classified as “predatory.” It is not a result of the animal’s biology or ecology. “Predatory” status is erroneous and unscientific.
- Beavers are herbivores, that is, they do not prey on other animals.

## *Challenges of “Predatory” Status*

- Because of their “predatory” status on private lands, Oregon allows unlimited killing of beavers. There is no tracking of this beaver removal.
- Because of their status, ODFW has no authority to manage them or regulate harvest on private lands.
- There is no state wide population monitoring of beavers by ODFW – we do not know how many beavers we have in our state!

**THE SOLUTION:** HB 3464 A. If we change this one classification, Oregon will be more fire resilient, will have healthier salmon runs, and more!

## *What does HB 3464 A do?*

- It removes beaver from “predatory animal” statute.
- It streamlines beaver management into a single state agency (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) for informed management such that the benefits of beaver in mitigating climate change impacts like wildfire, drought, and protection of imperiled species is accounted for and fully realized.
- It closes data collection gaps outlined by state and federal agencies, public stakeholders and the Beaver Working Group for more informed management of beaver.
- It upholds the provisions on beaver take under the Private Forest Accord for all private forestland owners.
- It provides landowners the ability to take beaver without permit in response to imminent threat to infrastructure and crop damage

## *How did the bill do in Committee?*

The bill was assigned to the House Committee on Climate, Energy and the Environment and successfully moved out of committee with **unanimous bipartisan** support.



Photo: Beaver habitat mitigates damage after Idaho's Sharps Fire, by Dr. Joe Wheaton, Utah State University.



# HB 3464 A: Frequently Asked Questions

## What changes did the bill go through in the first Chamber (the House)?

1. It clarified that wherever the Private Forest Accord (PFA) applies, PFA's provisions related to beaver take will be upheld for both small and large forestland owners. It does this in the bill language and creates statutory provisions under ORS 498.012,
2. It gave landowners the authority to take beaver without permit from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife if there is imminent threat to infrastructure or agricultural crops. Reporting the take is still required, and
3. It directed the Fish and Wildlife Commission to undertake rules to determine conditions under which landowners might be able to take beaver without permit. Reporting the take is still required.

## Under HB 3464 A will landowners be able to remove beavers from their property in a timely fashion?

Yes. Under HB 3464, **landowners will be able to get a free permit all year** from ODFW to take a beaver with a single point of contact with ODFW field staff. Additionally, HB 3464 adds two clauses to ORS 498.012 that allows landowners to take beaver if there is imminent threat to infrastructure or agricultural crops, and if the Private Forest Accord allows them to do so.

## How does HB 3464 A interact with provisions on beaver management under the Private Forest Accord?

HB 3464 has a subsection (9) that clarifies that the rules developed under this bill will not apply to land where the Private Forest Accord applies. It further protects small forestland owner provisions under the Private Forest Accord under ORS 498.012 2(c)(B) so they are not subject to rules developed under this bill.

## How do beavers help with climate change?

**Carbon storage:** Wetlands and wet meadows created by beavers are natural carbon capture-and-store areas that extract large amounts of carbon from the atmosphere, in decaying matter below ground, in riparian vegetation, and in beaver ponds. Beaver habitat also improves the ability of fish and wildlife to survive climate impacts.

**Wildfire:** Beavers create and maintain wetlands, wet meadows, and ponds which are natural fire breaks. The areas provide refuge for livestock and wildlife during fires and habitat post-fire. Beaver ponds create natural fire breaks create safety zones for wildlife to survive extreme fire events

**Drought:** Beaver habitats are more stable and less sensitive to short-term climate variability because they contain reservoirs of surface and groundwater that buffer habitats from drought and they create conditions for groundwater recharge to occur during flooding. Beaver ponds, wetlands and wet meadows hold water in storage and slowly release it, helping to offset declines in stream flows and water quality related to declining snowpack and spring melt.

**Native fish:** Beaver ponds and beaver maintained wetlands provide critical winter rearing habitat for juvenile Coho salmon. Ponds and wetlands temporarily store surface and groundwater which later contribute to cooler stream temperatures. Currently, ODEQ has identified more than 89,000 miles of streams in Oregon as too warm.