

## **Oppose HB 3464 A – Unnecessary and Complicated System of Beaver Management for Agricultural Landowners**

Chair Golden and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Farm Bureau Federation appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of our nearly 6,600 family farm and ranch members across the state of Oregon. We oppose HB 3464 A which removes beavers from the statutory definition of “predatory animal” under Oregon law and creates an unnecessary and complicated system of beaver management for private agricultural landowners who are only interested in protecting an investment.

Currently, ORS 610 defines “predatory animal” or “predatory animals” to include feral swine, coyotes, rabbits, rodents, and birds that are or may be destructive to agricultural crops, products, and activities. Many agricultural sectors rely on effective predatory animal management to prevent significant economic losses on their farms. Under the current law, producers have been able to effectively (and minimally) manage predatory animal damage and mitigate these losses to their operations. The existing law works, is easy to understand and includes managing damage from beavers.

The term “predatory animal” is a statutory term and does not mean that an animal under ORS 610 is a “predator” – these two terms are constantly confused by those outside of agricultural land management. Additionally, over the years activists opposed to the management of beavers have purposefully intertwined the terms. Most of the animals defined as “predatory animals” under ORS 610 are **not** predators under the plain language of the words, they are rodents, birds, and other pests that destroy crops. To change an adequate, functional, and readily understood existing law because there is confusion between a term defined in statute and a word meaning a different thing in the English language is neither good public policy or a reason to disregard concerns from the producers and land managers who will be impacted by this legislation.

HB 3464 A creates a complicated system of beaver management solely to remove them from the list of “predatory animals” defined under ORS 610. During negotiations in the House chamber, OFB offered amendments to HB 3464 that would have allowed for reporting of the take of beavers by agricultural landowners, aligning them with small woodland owners under the PFA, while keeping their management under ORS 610- but those amendments were wholly dismissed by the bill sponsor solely because of the retention of the “predatory animal” designation.

Instead, we are left with HB 3464 A which will be complicated for landowners to comply with because it is nearly impossible for them to figure out which management scheme they fall under. HB 3464 A says that a private landowner needs a permit to take a beaver unless:

- The beaver damages or imminently threatens infrastructure or agricultural crops, or
- If you are a “small forestland, if the beaver is causing damage or has the potential to cause damage. Small forestland is defined as all land that is used for the growing and harvesting of forest tree species, regardless of how the land is zoned or taxed or how any state or local statutes, ordinances, rules, or regulations are applied. Under the language of the rule, the trees do not need to be harvested for commercial purposes.

In both instances the take must be reported to ODFW; however, if you are small forestland, you can take a beaver if there is the “**potential to cause damage**,” but agricultural landowners can take if the beaver “**imminently threatens agricultural crops**.” Neither term is defined in the bill.

As an agricultural landowner, I could own agricultural land and grow two “forest tree species” on my property and plan to harvest one of them- in that instance, under HB 3464 A, could I take a beaver under the small forestland provision? Or should I only take under the agricultural provision? Technically under the definition of small forestland under bill I would arguably qualify to take if there is the “potential” vs “imminently threaten.” HB 3464 A is unnecessarily confusing for landowners to determine which provisions they fall under and how to legally manage beavers on their operations.

HB 3464 A allows for no consideration of a farmer or ranchers’ operation, time, expense, or economic loss, including any losses related to the delay in management while they try to determine the complicated management structure HB 3464 A has created. Without effective predatory animal control, our producers would experience significant losses of crop types, orchard trees, etc., that they cannot absorb. Continuing management of predatory animals, under the proper definition, including beavers, is important to the successful continuation of production agriculture in our state.

***Please Vote NO HB 3464 A.***