



WaterWatch of Oregon

Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers

HB 4014

Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon

by Kimberley Priestley

House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment

February 5, 2024

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers and aquifers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation, and other public uses of Oregon's waters. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch supports HB 4014

Beavers provide great benefits to Oregon's aquatic environment, including but not limited to providing ecological uplift to streamflows, fish and wildlife habitat, aquatic habitat connectivity, water quality, floodplain restoration and wetland health. Additionally, the temporary storing of water in ponds helps mitigate the effects of drought and temper flooding, both of which are critically important in helping Oregon address the impacts of climate change.

HB 4014 sets up a Landowners Living with Beavers Fund that would provide grants to mitigate the effects of beavers on private lands. It also appropriates \$1.5 million into the fund. This fund will allow opportunities to landowners and their partners to fund non-lethal mitigation techniques, as well as funding ODFW to provide technical assistance to landowners who want to explore non-lethal mitigation measures on their land. The program is wholly voluntary.

ODFW has developed a 3-year beaver management plan that recognizes the importance of private lands in maintaining a healthy population of beavers that provide important ecosystem services. HB 4014 will allow a funding mechanism, as well as dollars, to achieve the plan's goals and help landowners who want to coexist with beavers.

We urge the Committee to support HB 4014.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

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