



National Headquarters

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February 5, 2024

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Letter of support for H.B. 4014 (Landowners Living with Beavers Grant Program)

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy, B. and Levy, E., and Members of the Committee,

My name is Colin Reynolds. I am the Senior Advisor to the Northwest Program at Defenders of Wildlife (“Defenders”) and a resident of Oregon. Defenders is a national conservation organization dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities, with over 48,000 members and supporters in Oregon. On behalf of Defenders, I am submitting the following comments in support of H.B. 4014.

This bill would authorize the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission to implement a “Landowners Living with Beavers Grant Program” (“Beaver Grant Program”) that would award grants to implement projects on private land that quickly and efficiently mitigate the effects of beavers on recipients’ private land. This bill would also establish reporting requirements and appropriate \$1.5 million to the Oregon Conservation and Recreation fund for purposes related to the Beaver Grant Program.

Coexisting with wildlife is integral to Defenders’ mission, and we have been at the forefront of coexistence efforts for decades across the United States including currently supporting a beaver cost-share program in Northern New Mexico.ⁱ We believe properly designed, funded, and implemented community-based coexistence programs can work to reduce instances of human-wildlife conflict, and we are excited to support the creation and funding of the Beaver Grant Program.

Defenders believes the Beaver Grant Program will bring positive impacts to Oregonians. Recent studies have shown that beavers can help mitigate the risks of heat,ⁱⁱ drought,ⁱⁱⁱ and fire.^{iv} Recent studies have also shown that the presence of beavers also helps other wildlife in areas where beavers reside,^v providing ponds and wetlands for endangered species filtered of pollution.^{vi}

Defenders commends the legislature for its previous work removing the predatory animal designation from beaver,^{vii} and we ask you to build on this work by creating the Beaver Grant Program and passing H.B. 4014.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Colin Reynolds

Senior Advisor, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife



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- ⁱ *Traditional Farming Communities Coexist with Beavers*, DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE (April 6, 2022), <https://defenders.org/blog/2022/04/traditional-farming-communities-coexist-beavers>.
- ⁱⁱ Benjamin Dittbrenner, et. al., *Relocated beaver can increase water storage and decrease stream temperature in headwater streams*, ECOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.4168>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Benji Jones, *Beavers are Heat Wave Heroes*, VOX (July 12, 2023), <https://www.vox.com/down-to-earth/23273240/heat-wave-beavers-climate-change>. (“Beavers also provide insurance against droughts, by helping replenish the groundwater that humans rely on.”).
- ^{iv} Emily Farifax & Andrew Whittle, *Smokey the Beaver: beaver-dammed riparian corridors stay green during wildfire throughout the western United States*, ECOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2225>.
- ^v Fedyn, Izabela, et. al., *Beyond beaver wetlands: The engineering activities of a semi-aquatic mammal mediate the species richness and abundance of terrestrial birds wintering in a temperate forest*, FOREST ECOLOGY & MGMT. (2023), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378112722006922>.
- ^{vi} Goldfarb, Ben, *Spying on Beavers From Space Could Help Save California*, WIRED (Dec. 28, 2023), <https://www.wired.com/story/spying-on-beavers-from-space-could-help-save-california/>.
- ^{vii} H.B. 3634 (2023), <https://apps.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Measures/Overview/HB3464>.