

February 4, 2024

Today I'm writing in support of HB 4014

Having more tools available to preserve both beaver habitat and populations is a good idea.

In the 1990's there was a program available to landowners in cooperation with the Grande Ronde Model Watershed, ODFW and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to provide materials and labor for landowners who desired to improve riparian habitat on their property. At that time I owned property on Little Creek near Union, Oregon in Union county. We fenced both sides of about 1900 feet of streambed with New Zealand style wire. In the next few years, Beavers occupied the area, built several dams and caused the stream to create new channels during high water events. This negatively impacted existing alfalfa fields when the channel overflowed. We hired a trapper to remove the majority of beavers from the riparian zone. Had there been a program available to mitigate the damage and tools to allow the beavers to remain while protecting the agricultural practices we engaged in, we would have considered it.

Stream flows in Little Creek diminish significantly during the summer and fall and water temperatures increase accordingly. At the end of August one year I measured water temperatures at the upstream property line at 74° at the downstream property line 67°. While this study has n=1 and is very unscientific, I feel good thinking that 7 degree difference is right in the sweet spot for anadromous smolt survival. Little Creek is part of the Grande Ronde river system which still supports Salmon and Steelhead populations.

It appears to me that passing this bill will produce improvements in how land owners interact with beavers and give them tools to allow beavers to remain on the land and potentially improve streamside habitat at the same time.

Regards,
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