

HB 4014 – funding for beaver coexistence

Learning to live with beaver provides ecosystem benefits to individual landowners as well as the broader community. Beaver behavior including dam building slows water down, keeping it on the landscape longer for people to enjoy and benefit from. Beaver activity also results in stored sediment, which in turn, is a valuable medium for growing riparian vegetation and providing habitat for a wide range of species. These connected floodplains serve as a filter that produces clean water, provides recreational opportunities and economic benefits that we have slowly lost over time.

As we transition from a state of misunderstanding beavers on private lands to one of opening our minds to our state animal, we need to provide landowners with the tools to make this transition as smooth as possible. For years, the management of beavers on private lands in Oregon has hindered our ability to understand the benefits of these restoration specialists, leaving landowners with limited options. However, the passing of HB3464 has shifted the management, monitoring and options for private landowners living with beaver in Oregon. HB4014 will build on HB3464 by providing landowners and community members funding and tools to adjust to these new management changes and recognition of the importance of beavers on private lands in Oregon. These dedicated funds will assist landowners with learning to live with beaver by providing opportunities to receive technical training on the installation and maintenance of coexistence devices that protect infrastructure, agricultural resources and personal property. Funds from HB4014 can also be used to purchase the materials necessary to install these protective measures with the intent of gaining the benefits from beaver activity while protecting private property and road infrastructure.

In addition, HB4014 can help with outreach efforts that would help landowners understand the benefits of living with beavers and what tools are available to them for coexisting with beavers. The science is clear, beavers are beneficial to fish, wildlife and people and outreach can help inform this knowledge by changing the narrative from a species largely viewed as a detriment on the landscape, to one of a partner in restoring parched lands, depleted groundwater and vegetation. As populations of beavers rebound, it is essential to tell this story in order to shift away from the former management and perception of our state animal.

Funding from HB4014 will provide opportunities to help support efforts currently underway by our state fish and wildlife agency in developing a beaver management plan.

Beaver behaviors lead to positive ecological outcomes for individuals and the communities that allow them to occupy their native habitats. However, these behaviors can also prove challenging depending on the land use and management. HB 4014 provides a funding source for private landowners and community members to receive these benefits from learning to live with beaver on their property or community while mitigating concerns they may have. This is why I urge you to support HB4014.