



February 5, 2024

RE: HB 4014

The Tualatin River Watershed Council is writing in support of HB 4014. In 2023, the legislature passed HB 3464, which removed the predatory animal status of beavers and shifted management on private lands from the Department of Agriculture to Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). Under this new classification as furbearers on private lands, landowners have more opportunities to consider non-lethal management tools and techniques should they want to. This creates an opportunity to provide an alternative to beaver extermination. However, our state currently does not have any dedicated funding to support landowners, both financially and in technical capacity that would allow landowners to shift from historical management practices to new non-lethal options.

The costs of management approaches and the lack of technical know-how are deterrents to landowners who might be open to trying non-lethal options. HB 4014 will help landowners who are hindered by these challenges. Currently, Oregon has a limited number of individuals who have the technical skill and capacity to help landowners, and the knowledge on the effectiveness of one tool over another based on the circumstance at hand. HB 4014 allows for some of the funds to be used to build our state's capacity in providing technical assistance to landowners.

The Landowners Living with Beaver Grant Program Fund that is outlined in HB 4014 will be established within Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) through the Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund (OCRF) to provide funding that supports beaver coexistence strategies for private landowners efficiently, quickly, and as needed. The TRWC supports that the bill provides an allocation of \$1.5M continuously appropriated with a Legislative Report due in 2026. Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund will award block grant funds up to \$50K to eligible applicants, including Watershed Councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and nonprofit organizations, for the purpose of implementing beaver mitigation projects on private land. The funds are dedicated to landowners who are already living with beavers and would like to explore non-lethal methods.

A shift in approaching beaver impacts will build tolerance for the species over time and can help change the narrative about the species from "pest" to an ally of landowners and farmers. Grant funds may be used for non-lethal mitigation tools, including but not limited to tree protection tools, flood prevention devices, culvert and infrastructure protection systems, crop protection strategies, and landowner education/outreach.

It is widely recognized that beaver habitats recharge groundwater, enhance fire resiliency, create climate refugia for other species, improve water quality and support healthy habitat for salmon. ODFW, with help from stakeholders, developed a 3-year Beaver Action Plan in 2023, which aims to advance restoration of beaver habitats and includes private lands. Landowners will benefit if financial assistance is made available in HB 4014 to protect beaver habitats and advance the 3-year Beaver Action Plan goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott McEwen", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Scott McEwen

Executive Director  
Tualatin River Watershed Council