



February 5, 2024

House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment

RE: HB 4014

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (“OACD”), I am writing in support of House Bill 4014.

OACD has worked with Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state for years to protect and improve wildlife habitat while supporting our working lands, including forestry and agricultural land. We all recognize the value that beavers bring to the landscape and wish to support landowners and managers in working and living with beavers in a proactive and positive way.

As an urban resident, I have personally been volunteering for years with private property owners to understand the positive impacts that beavers have on our local ecosystems and habitats, and to teach these landowners how to live in harmony with beavers, particularly along our smaller and sometimes ephemeral creeks in more urban areas with smaller properties.

I live on the border of southwest Portland and Beaverton in a neighborhood that is home to several coyote packs and other mammals and birds, a small creek, and hundreds of trees of various types and ages.

About three years ago my neighbors were intensely engaged with each other after a tree had fallen on a new neighbor’s house as a result of beaver activity. The family had moved into the neighborhood within the past year, and a tree had landed on their children’s bedroom. The parents were scared and angry and they wanted the beaver gone as soon as possible. They were soliciting neighbors for financial assistance to hire someone to trap and exterminate the beaver.

I explained the value of beaver activity and that planning ahead with tree caging or meshing can be very effective at reducing potential impacts to trees near homes.

The family responded that they didn’t have the funding or time to wrap each tree in mesh and believed that beavers are nuisance animals that should be exterminated.

I offered to solicit for mesh donations from the local soil and water conservation district, and to recruit volunteers from our local watershed council. Other neighbors hopped into the conversation and offered their assistance, but the family was adamant that beavers are a nuisance, they present a danger to private homes, and the family wanted to use lethal means to remove the beaver from their property.

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In the end, after much discussion and, frankly, several angry conversations, the family agreed to allow volunteers onto their property to wrap their trees in meshing.

However, I have had inquiries from other neighbors for education about beavers and financial resources to assist with mitigation so they can wrap other trees in meshing.

Our neighborhood is the perfect example of healthy habitat for beavers who are living within 20 feet on private homes. We have well over 100 homes in our neighborhood, and homeowners don't want damage to their homes. However, most of them do not know how to coexist with beavers, nor do they have the financial resources to implement non-lethal mitigation techniques.

Ours is not a unique example; home and landowners across the state want to understand how to live with beaver activity without extermination. They simply lack the technical knowledge or funding to do so.

The timing is ripe now for programming and funding for private landowners to implement non-lethal mitigation techniques. People are scared about potential negative impacts to trees on their properties and funding programming for beaver mitigation and coexistence tools for private landowners is the right thing to do now. Soil and water conservation districts and watershed councils are positioned to deliver technical assistance on and-the-ground support to landowners and simply need funding to do this work.

Please vote yes on House Bill 4014.

Thank you,

Terri Preeg Riggsby

Vice-President, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts