



American Fisheries Society Oregon Chapter

OR Chapter AFS: PO Box 8062 Portland, OR 97207-8062 www.orafs.org

Date: February 4, 2025

RE: OREGON CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY SUPPORT TO HOUSE BILL 3143 RELATING TO CREATION OF THE LANDOWNERS LIVING WITH BEAVERS GRANT PROGRAM

Co-Chairs Rep. Helm and Owens and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

The Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (ORAFS) comprises over 500 fisheries and aquatics science professionals from federal, state, and tribal agencies, colleges and universities, diverse private employers, college students, and retirees. ORAFS was established in 1964 as a chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Our mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of Oregon fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems for long-term public benefit by advancing science, education and public discourse concerning fisheries and aquatic science and by promoting the development of fisheries professionals.

ORAFS members support HB 3143 for three primary reasons.

- 1) **Beavers are a keystone species that can provide beneficial roles in maintaining and enhancing riparian and aquatic ecosystems.** Beavers are an important part of Oregon's landscape. Through the construction of dams, beavers help elevate water tables that enhance riparian vegetation and trap eroding soils. Beaver dams help reduce streambank and channel erosion; improve water quality; and stabilize streamflow in summer and in times of drought. The beneficial effects of beavers also help maintain native fish populations important to Oregon's recreational and commercial fisheries.
- 2) **Establishment of a sub-account specific to this program.** This bill would allow block grants to be issued to private landowners, watershed councils, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and eligible non-profit organizations to support beaver co-existence on private lands. The funds would allow the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, upon recommendation from the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee, to support a variety of tools and methods to help landowners have positive impacts on habitat and beaver populations. The tools, as spelled out in the proposed House Bill, include specific on-site actions targeted at flood prevention and crop protection, along with education, outreach, and technical assistance. These are appropriate actions for improving landowner co-existence with beavers. The specific appropriation of funds to implement this program will help increase and maintain private landowner support and knowledge of managing beavers.
- 3) **Accountability of the program is tracked through required submission of a joint report to the legislature.** The requirement of a joint report by the State Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee, including not just expenditures, but also the outcomes of the actions funded under the program will help highlight the best practices that address private land beaver management.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our support for HB 3143. ORAFS is in support of legislation that assists private landowners in living compatibly with beavers. The work that beavers can contribute to healthy streamside vegetation supports fisheries, wildlife, livestock, and water quality and quantity in Oregon's watersheds.

Respectfully,

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