



March 25, 2025

Chair John Lively,
Vice-Chair Mike Gamba,
Vice Chair Bob Levy

Oregon House of Representatives
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 3932, the “Beavers and Water Quality” Bill

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 3932, a proposal that is essential to restoring natural processes that will help repair our degraded and polluted public waterways. HB 3932 is a common sense bill that builds on the growing momentum capitalizing on the appreciation of, and the need for, enabling beavers to manage habitat along public waterways for the benefit of water quality, quantity, wildlife and human communities. The state’s commitment and holistic approach to conserving beaver and supporting beaver habitat management is evident and commendatory in the many, complementary legislative and policy efforts in recent years, including:

- HB 3464 (2023), *enrolled*, improving data collection on beaver take, removing beaver from state “predators” list
- HB 3143 (2025), seeks funding to support landowners to adopt non-lethal beaver coexistence strategies
- HB 2984, seeks to solidify funding for the Oregon Conservation and Recreation
- Private Forest Accord, improves riparian management, and beaver management on private property, and funds restoration
- State Wildlife Action Plan, Oregon’s decadal strategy for conserving Species of Greatest Conservation Need and Key Habitats, with opportunities to conserve beaver
- Beaver Action Plan, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s guidance for gathering data on beaver and management improvements.
- Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission’s Beaver Management Working Group, stakeholders producing beaver management recommendations to the state Commission

Not listed above are the millions of dollars invested by state, federal and private organizations on riparian and beaver habitat restoration across Oregon, as well as the hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours contributed to accomplish riparian restoration efforts. Conserving beavers and beaver habitat is very important to Oregon and Oregonians, an issue that we have supported again and again.

HB 3932 closes the loop on these efforts by allowing beavers to manage floodplains where they are needed most in Oregon. Beaver managed floodplains, and all the multitude of benefits they provide to

hundreds of wildlife species, as well as human communities and economies depend entirely on one defining component: the continuous management, maintenance and improvement of the habitat by beavers. If you “remove” the beaver from beaver managed floodplains, those benefits wash away as fast as the water.

Almost one third of Oregon’s rivers and streams are designated by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as “impaired,” contending with high temperatures, high sediment loads and polluting substances that top DEQ’s list of factors impairing our waterways . Additionally, many of Oregon’s streams have become so hydrologically simplified that they quickly drain water off of the landscape and then run dry by mid-summer, when the water is most needed. This creates a situation that is harmful to hundreds of species of wildlife and people that directly depend on these resources for their survival and livelihood.

Scientific literature, such as the [“Beaver: The North American Freshwater Climate Action Plan,”](#) embrace the beaver’s ability to mitigate the very same issues that impair Oregon’s waterways. This isn’t speculation by advocates and beaver enthusiasts—it is the overwhelming conclusion drawn from dozens of peer-reviewed publications on the topic.

Unfortunately, beaver were intentionally (nearly) extirpated from Oregon in the 1820’s as part of the [Hudson’s Bay Company’s “fur desert” policy](#). Over the many decades since, their habitat has been degraded, dried and stripped of vegetation. In many cases, former beaver habitat has been permanently converted to other land uses. Our impaired waterways need beavers to return in the wild lands that remain.

Closing impaired streams to beaver trapping on public lands is important to fostering beaver management of riparian areas, as is clearly found in [a review of published studies from around the world](#). Oregon has also previously deployed a strategy of statewide trapping closures for beaver to great success in the past. It was so successful, in fact, that in 1960 the Oregon Chief Fur Resources Biologist [referred to the closures as](#) “...A REMARKABLE EXAMPLE of a fur species responding to protection...” Unfortunately, the gains achieved by these closures were quickly lost again when trapping was again allowed statewide. This current regulatory approach frustrates the important progress the state has made elsewhere in beaver conservation policy as described above.

Watershed restoration with beaver, and the associated benefits to water quality and quantity, requires just two prerequisites: prepare the habitat, and protect beavers so they can improve and maintain it. It is pointless to invest in restoring habitat that will depend on active management by a creature that may be immediately removed from the system. HB 3932 solves this problem by sustaining the few beavers successfully managing floodplains on public lands, and by providing proactive protection that allows beavers to safely expand into, and manage more, streams, including those specially prepared to welcome beavers pursuant to the policies described above.

The Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) can attest to the soundness of this strategy. For more than fifteen years, ONDA has worked with diverse stakeholders throughout Oregon’s high desert to restore the hydrology, habitats, connectivity and climate resilience of desert streams specifically by strategically addressing limiting factors that impede the restoration and maintenance of riverscapes by beavers. Over the years, again and again, we have seen restoration succeed wherever beavers are protected, and languish where they are not. The success of state, federal, local and landowner

conservation and climate resilience strategies involving beavers depends on creating a culture, and supporting policy and legal framework, that values beavers and their role as ecosystem engineers.

ONDA and our more than 25,000 members, supporters and followers support HB 3932 for how it helps close the loop by protecting the key collaborator we need to restore Oregon's impaired rivers and streams. The science on the benefits of beaver managed floodplains and the effectiveness trapping closures is settled and substantial. It is clear that beavers have a major role to serve in conserving and restoring Oregon's riverscapes, and the fish and wildlife, local communities and [regional economies that depend on them](#). HB 3932 is our next, key opportunity to update our state's approach to beaver management for the benefit of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Jefferson Jacobs

Jefferson Jacobs
Riparian Restoration Manager
Oregon Natural Desert Association
50 SW Bond Street, Suite 4
Bend, Oregon, 97702
(541) 330-2638
jjacobs@onda.org