

Submitter: Paul Howard

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1153

Dear Chair Rep. Lively, Rep. Vice-Chair Gamba, Rep. Vice-Chair Levy and members of the committee,

Improved water quality is important to Oregonians. Thousands of miles of Oregon's waterways are in poor health. I urge you to support HB 3932 to allow beavers to improve watershed health, protect water quality and help restore Oregon's impaired waterways for free. We now know the benefits of beavers as ecosystem engineers. Let's allow this keystone species to continue to provide benefits to watersheds by preventing lethal removal on public lands where they live on water quality impaired waterways.

Plenty of well-done research shows evidence of the work of beavers can address most of the water quality issues of concern. This bill is NOT about limiting beaver harvest or hunting. Instead, this bill would enable beavers to access waterways where they need to be and remain long enough to perform their ecosystem functions without getting trapped out. That said, as a hunter who has hunted beavers for their meat and used the hide, bones and teeth, I do wish there were limitations placed on trapping or hunting of beavers because in a lot of places and situations, they are over-hunted and over-trapped. The OR Department of Environmental Quality has already listed so many streams as water quality limited, let's keep this species which can improve water quality on the landscape, doing their work for free.

?Another good bill to pass which will help protect fish and water quality is Senate Bill 1153. Senate Bill 1153, a bill that will ensure fish and water quality are not harmed in water right transfers.

We know that water diversion in the Rogue and other parts of Oregon can have an impact on water quality by removing or altering flows or adding pollutants. Under current law, the state can approve water rights transfers and similar changes to existing water rights without considering impacts to stream flows and the fish and water quality they support.

SB 1153 will close this harmful regulatory loophole in Oregon's water transfer laws that allow changes to an existing water right without any environmental review. As users of legal water rights often make changes that can have negative water quality impacts, this loophole nullifies Oregon's ability to protect instream values on hundreds of streams across the state. The Rogue basin has an extensive system of

water rights and use. This bill would have a direct impact on how water rights impact water quality and fish habitat in the Rogue by ensuring that changes to water rights are reviewed for environmental impacts.

Please support and pass HB 3932 and SB 1153

Thanks!