



Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy and members of the Committee,

On behalf of our over 12,000 members we urge you to please support passage of HB 3932 - "Beavers and Water Quality Bill". The Bird Alliance of Oregon's mission is to "Inspire all people to love and protect birds, wildlife, and the natural environment upon which life depends." At 122 years old, we are the longest serving conservation organization in Oregon.

Oregon's water quality is a serious environmental concern. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) survey data indicates a huge chunk of Oregon's waterways are deemed "impaired". This "impaired" classification is based on recommendations for Oregon by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and by the federal Clean Water Act.

Category 4 and 5 of DEQ's categories of water quality standards fall in the "impaired" classification. Federal Clean Water Act requires DEQ to develop and implement what is known as a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for each of the pollutant for a waterway that causes it to be deemed impaired. DEQ does not have the resources to develop and implement TMDLs for all the waterways that need them. Indeed, most of their TMDLs are a result of litigation and court-mandated directive. DEQ's survey data indicates that the top five factors that lead to an "impaired" classification are high stream temperature, dissolved oxygen, sedimentation, bio-criteria (health of invertebrates) and shellfish toxins.

HB 3932 aims to address Oregon's severe water quality issues in streams deemed "impaired" by DEQ. The bill attempts to do so by using a natural ecological solution – specifically, beaver dam complexes that are known to slow down, filter and clear some of the known pollutants of our waterways. There is robust scientific evidence that beaver dams can improve water quality and address many of the factors that cause streams and rivers to be impaired in Oregon. HB 3932 proposes closing trapping of beavers on waterways on public lands classified as impaired by DEQ. The bill also provides an off ramp of removing the closures if a stream or river is removed from the impaired categories.

In addition to improving water quality in our many impacted waterways, the co-benefits beavers would provide to repairing our ecosystems would be immeasurable. Beavers

are ecosystem engineers and create and restore wetland which translates to new habitat and food resources for many wildlife and fish species from endangered salmon to migratory songbirds to myriad insects. Beaver-managed floodplains help 146 Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) Species or 50% of all OCS species¹.

ODFW's 2024 data shows state and federal public lands combined accounted for only 4% of reported beaver harvest. Less beaver harvest reported on public lands is likely due to low beaver presence on public lands. This bill is not about limiting beaver harvest and increasing beaver population. Instead, this bill helps retain the few beavers we have on public lands, and would enable others to access waterways where they need to be and remain there long enough to perform their ecosystem functions without getting trapped out.

Please support HB 3932 for the benefits it will bring to water, wildlife, and people.

Joe Liebezeit
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¹ Dunning and Jacobs. 2024. Assessment of the benefits Beaver managed floodplains to Oregon Conservation Strategy Species: A Literature Review. Oregon Natural Desert Association.