



To
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR

Date: 04.30.2025

Letter of Support for HB 3932

Chair Golden and members of the Committee

We, the Oregon Wildlife Coalition, support HB 3932 (beaver and water quality bill) for the benefits it brings to our public lands as well as the fish and wildlife and human communities that depend on them.

Oregon's water quality is a serious environmental concern. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has survey data for only 46% of our waterways and of that waterways surveyed about two-thirds have been 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 that using 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 four of the five factors that causes streams and rivers to be impaired in Oregon, namely, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, sedimentation and bio-criteria. HB 3932 proposes closing trapping of beavers on waterways on public lands classified as impaired by DEQ. However, it is very narrowly focused on the waterways

themselves – it does not apply to all public lands, and it only covers 200 ft buffer of land around an impaired waterway.

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 help 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.

As proposed in this bill, beavers are one new tool in DEQ's toolbox to treat impaired waterways but they cannot prevent the external factors causing degradation in the first place. For e.g. in some of the areas with existing closures, logging and grazing continue to be the main factors contributing to stream impairment. Closures and restoration efforts have to work in tandem to address causes of water quality degradation. Beavers cannot prevent streams from becoming impaired but they are a nature-based solution to treating impaired waters. HB 3932 makes the connection between DEQ and ODFW to work together on this issue – DEQ does not work on beaver monitoring or management and ODFW's mandate does not cover addressing water quality. HB 3932 uses the legislature to pull the strength of two agencies that otherwise would not have been able to come together in this creative way to address a significant problem in Oregon. The bill does not apply to private lands and it allows for take of beaver on public lands in instances of damage caused by beavers on adjacent private lands.

We urge you to support HB 3932 for the benefits it will bring to water and wildlife, and for Oregonians who depend on both.

Thanking you

Cascadia Wildlands

Humane World for Animals

Oregon Wild

Humane Voters Oregon

Defenders of Wildlife

Bird Alliance of Oregon

Western Environmental Law Center

Willamette Riverkeeper

Think Wild