

Submitter: Matthew Wyss
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3932

Subject: Support HB 3932: Let Beavers Restore Oregon's Impaired Waterways
Dear Committee Member,

I am writing to urge your support for House Bill 3932, a crucial piece of legislation that aims to leverage the natural engineering capabilities of beavers to restore Oregon's impaired rivers and streams.

HB 3932 specifically targets waterways categorized as Category 4 or 5 under the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) water quality standards. These categories, along with waterways deemed impaired under the Clean Water Act, represent a significant portion of Oregon's aquatic ecosystems. Alarmingly, over two-thirds of surveyed waterways in Oregon, totaling 106,390 miles, are currently classified as "impaired."

This bill proposes a common-sense approach to address these water quality issues by temporarily closing hunting and trapping of beavers on impaired waterways located on public lands. Robust scientific evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that beaver dam complexes can effectively address many of the pollutants and ecological imbalances that lead to water quality impairment. Furthermore, beavers provide this vital ecosystem service entirely free of charge.

It's important to note that this legislation is not a broad ban on beaver trapping, nor is its primary goal to drastically increase beaver populations statewide. In fact, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) data from 2023 indicates that only 4% of beaver harvest occurs on public lands. Instead, HB 3932 is strategically designed to allow beavers to naturally disperse to these impaired public waterways and remain there long enough to establish dam complexes and perform their essential ecological functions without the immediate threat of trapping.

We have already witnessed the remarkable positive impacts of beaver restoration efforts in areas like the Tualatin River watershed. By supporting HB 3932, we can expand these successes across Oregon, harnessing the power of nature's engineers to improve water quality, enhance habitat, and create more resilient ecosystems. Please consider the compelling scientific evidence and the minimal impact on current trapping practices when making your decision on HB 3932. Your support for this bill will be a significant step towards restoring the health of Oregon's precious waterways.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Matthew Wyss