

Testimony in Support of HB 3932 A

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Chair Jones, members of the committee, my name is Charles Schelz. I am from Ashland Oregon, and I traveled all the way to Salem today to support HB 3932.

I was **an ecologist** for the Federal Government for over 30 years. I am now retired and have an ecological consulting company. I have worked **mainly** with the National Park Service throughout the southwestern US, but have also worked in eastern Oregon with the Forest Service, and in southwestern Oregon for the BLM

During my career, I **focused on assessing and monitoring** the health of ecological systems, including water quality and quantity, **and particularly**, on the restoration of these systems. During my career, I consistently came across degraded areas where beavers were eliminated. I have spent **my life** studying ecosystem components and connections. It's complicated. But one thing **I am certain of**, is that beavers are a **vital component** of healthy riparian areas and floodplains. Because of the availability of water, Riparian areas are the most **biologically productive parts of ecosystems** in the western United States, and over 80% of our wildlife depend on them for survival at some point in their lives.

In the National Park Service, I was a regional ecologist focused on the restoration of natural areas. Whenever we were **planning a project**, my 1st question was always: **"How are the riparian areas and floodplains?** If they were in poor condition, that is where we always started, because they are so important to the overall area's ecological health, especially to water quality and water retention. And we **always asked** if beavers are present?"

If not, we immediately focused on creating habitat conditions to bring them back. **And when beavers did come back**, they greatly assisted the restoration work that we did, **by repairing and maintaining** the areas after we left, 24/7, night and day.

HB 3932 is **so important**, because it greatly increases the chances, that beavers will survive and stay in an area. Though this bill **focuses on water quality**, it will also **greatly enhance** the many ecosystem services of beaver activities, far beyond the scope of this bill. **These services include drought and wildfire resilience**, increased biodiversity, increased water retention, raising the ground water level, soil erosion reduction, sediment retention, fish and aquatic habitat creation, etc. These are essential to mitigating the ongoing impacts of **climate change on our precious water resources and ecosystems**.