

To: Mary Wahl, Chair, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
CC: Commissioners, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Staff
Date: August 5, 2020
Re: Comments Beaver Management Working Group (BMWG)
Recommendations

I welcome this opportunity to give testimony concerning the beaver Management Working Group (BMWG) recommendations. I speak from one who has broad land management and coho recovery experience and someone who works with broad coalitions to effect positive change. I am also the Chair for the Midcoast Watersheds Council which was formed 26 years ago. The Council deals with about 1 million acres from Cascade Head to Heceta Head. Our Council is just one of about 65 watershed council around the state and about 300 around the region that are trying to improve water quality for their communities as well as well as working to recover ESA listed salmon population in their watersheds.

While there are number of valuable recommendations identified in the BMWG document I find it lacking in a number of ways. The BWMG did not truly deal with issues that are pertinent to key challenges facing Oregon now and into the future—namely coho and other ESA salmon recovery recommendations, Clean Water Act implementation, drought, fires and investments in restoration as well as the potential economic and ecological benefits of robust beaver populations.

So, I write to urge the commission to revisit your June 17th vote not to change trapping restrictions. The lack of discussion and analysis leads me again to support and push for an end of beaver hunting and trapping on federally managed public lands in Oregon.

I am also attaching a number of key links & documents that should have been reviewed and discussed in the BMWG Recommendation document, but were not; rendering it inadequate. These related to the role of beavers in solving:

1) Water quality issues. As you can see from the attached 303dlist map Oregon has significant water quality problems throughout the state. Of the total stream miles of over 300K miles less than 50% have been assessed. Of those 128K miles about 35K miles are designated as impaired. While this does not tell the whole story qualitatively temperature is Oregon's most ubiquitous pollution problem and that parameter influences a host of water quality and

habitat problems as well as makes many other pollution problems worse or with a worse effect on species (e.g., DO, nutrient, metals, toxics) Is it a surprise that we have 11 ESA listed salmon stocks in every bioregion in the state? Most of those stream miles are in the upper watersheds and many of those are on these federally managed public lands. Here the streams are of perfect size for beavers to build dams and create ponds and habitat.

I am working with many other coastal community members on the Mid-coast TMDL process with DEQ - it has been a very slow and unsuccessful process. As you can see from the article I have submitted (about the [Methow Beaver Program](#)), other communities within the region are using beavers currently to deal with the same water quality issues we are facing here in Oregon. Improving water quality would also be totally consistent with the policy direction of improving watershed health under the Northwest Forest Plan.

2) Oregon Conservation Strategy -- I believe my concerns with water quantity and quality for our community, salmon recovery of ESA listed stocks would be helped significantly by bringing beavers back to robust numbers at a landscape scale to help Oregon Conservation Strategy species.

The BMWG recommendations does not acknowledge the issue of 82 Strategy species that would directly benefit from having beavers fully utilizing their former range. The ecological ripple would be undeniable. We know beavers and their dams can provide many ecosystem benefits including migratory bird habitat in our beaver ponds, wetlands, and the wet meadows they form.

We know that their work creates a complexity and diversity of riparian habitat conditions across a watershed which increases food sources, and expands rearing areas, including snags, for cavity nesting species. These habitat features help multiple, sensitive, and declining species identified in the Conservation Strategy like the Willow Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Belted Kingfisher and other neotropical migratory birds.

3) We know there is a link between water quality and water quantity and the work of beavers. We also know there is a link between salmon recovery and beavers. There are 11 ESA listed salmon stocks with federal recovery plans and that improved water quality and stream complexity are just a few of several key factors identified for recovery of those stocks.

The Recovery Plans list a number of factors aiding recovery in each specific

region. For instance, the Snake River ESA has this reference: “Beechie et al. (2013) recommends that increasing floodplain connectivity, restoring stream flow regimes, and restoring incised channels to provide stream complexity (including through beaver reintroduction) are the actions most likely to ameliorate stream flow and temperature changes and increase habitat diversity and population resilience” (p201).

But, in the BMWG Recommendations document the Oregon Coastal Coho is only ESA listed salmon stock mentioned. Below is a list of other species with Federal Recovery Plans many of which specifically identified the loss of beaver as a contributing factor to habitat decline and ESA status. Across Oregon’s landscape are salmonid species that would benefit directly from robust beaver populations:.

Final Recovery Plan for the Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit of Coho Salmon

ESA Recovery Plan for Lower Columbia River Coho Salmon, Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon, Columbia River Chum Salmon, and Lower Columbia River Steelhead

Columbia River Estuary ESA Recovery Plan Module for Salmon & Steelhead

Upper Willamette River Conservation and Recovery Plan for Chinook Salmon and Steelhead

Middle Columbia River Steelhead Distinct Population Segment ESA Recovery Plan

ESA Recovery Plan for Snake River Fall Chinook

ESA Recovery Plan for Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook & Snake River Basin Steelhead

4)When I contacted Oregon Watershed Restoration Inventory(OWRI) staff to discuss investments that the state, federal, county, tribal governments and private industry has made in conservation efforts statewide I was totally amazed and impressed with the fact that in Oregon over \$1.15 Billion has been invested in restoration and recovery strategies since 1999. There were over 19,700 on-the-ground projects. Of those, a significant number of projects to recover watershed health were related to riparian restoration and instream complexity - including culvert replacements for improved fish passage.

As we consider the issues of investments to restore our landscape there should have been a clear acknowledgement of the benefits of beavers on the landscape. The BMWG and ODFW could incorporate a number of key

issues in the economic discussion. Issues that need a full airing would include the quantifying the value of salmon recovery, improving water quality, riparian zones and wetlands. There are also the climate and carbon benefits that would be a logical addition to any discussion and analysis.

Again, robust beaver populations would work in Oregon's streams - improving water quality and quantity. And of course this keystone species would work for natural storage in the upper basins on federal lands. And they work for free.

Oregon can beneficially influence all these issues immediately by ending trapping on public lands by revisiting OAR 635-050-0070 to protect the ecological benefits of beaver in Oregon watersheds on public lands. This does not preclude the tool to trap beavers if deemed necessary by the agencies involved, but we would encourage the agencies to first try non-lethal controls first given its effectiveness and benefits to fish, wildlife, water quality and water quantity.

I hope ODFW and the Commission will embrace an adaptive management approach to the management of beavers and not wait to act. It makes so much sense to bring Oregon's state animal back to robust populations at a landscape scale and be accepted as the keystone species it is.

It is time to embrace the facts that water shortages and drought are here and ODFW's management program must adapt and rise to these challenges due to climate change and the other conservation issues facing Oregon.

The opportunity to implement a significant change for climate is within your power. The time for action is now - this issue is challenging for sure but all Oregonians would benefit from the leadership of the Commission.

Paul Engelmeyer,

Attachments:

Links to videos pertinent to your discussions of this keystone species:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAM94B73bzE> : Beaver and fire by Dr. Emily Fairfax (45 seconds animation)

Want to solve wildfire and drought? Leave it beavers.

<https://youtu.be/6IT5W32xRN4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAM94B73bzE> : Beaver and fire by Dr. Emily Fairfax (45 seconds animation)

<https://vimeo.com/98496024>: Methow valley project-Climate change by Sarah Koenigsberg (2:21 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqNwmlaAJk8&authuser=0> : Beaver's role in the ecosystems and short history by Leanne Betosomosake Simpson. (< 5 minutes. Heidi Perryman created video collage to go along with speaker's talk)

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission: <http://habitat.psmfc.org/living-with-beaver/> by

- Beavers and Salmon: Beavers on Working Lands Featuring Landowners Betsy and Michael Stapleton (9:51 Minutes)
- Beavers and Salmon: Featuring Fish Biologist and Restoration Specialist Steve Trask (6:41 Minutes)
- Living with Beaver: Featuring Landowner Dave Powers (4:43 Minutes)
- Living with Beaver: Creating A More Dependable Water Supply: Featuring U.S. Forest Service Hydrologist Kami Ellingson (5:41 Minutes)

**Corvallis-Benton County Public Library and the Marys Peak Group of the Sierra Club:
Liz & Bob Frenkel Hiking and the Environment Spring Lecture Series.**

Beavallis 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFdpKghQhgzg>

Local Beavers : How they live and how we can live with them

- Brian Bangs: How Beavers Function
- America McMillian: Ten Years Observing the Beavers of Starker Arts Park
- Sheanna Steingass: The Benton County Way to Manage Beavers

Beavallis 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kgk2ZI5Lo48>

Opportunities for a New Beaver/Human Relationship

- Jakob Shockey: Helping Beavers and Humans Co-exist
- Kathleen Westly: Partner with Beavers in Oak Creek
- John Mellgren: Oregon Legislative Bills to Protect Beavers
- Randy Comeleo: An Oregon Legislative Bill to Promote Alternatives to Beaver Killing

Beavallis 3: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/4557078097092883983>.

Global and Local Benefits of Protecting Beavers

- Dr. Suzanne Fouty: Beavers: Water Availability and Water Quality
- Dr. Chris Jordan: Beavers and Fish Survival
- Dr. Emily Fairfax: Beavers and Wildfire

Map: 303 listed streams in Oregon

