

Understanding the Private Forest Accord

Beaver

Importance: The American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is a keystone species that plays a critical role in shaping our landscape. The role that beavers play in creating habitat for salmonids is well documented (e.g. page 3-3 of the Recovery Plan for Oregon Coastal Coho 2016¹). It is estimated that beaver activity directly benefits 37% of Strategy Habitats and 28% of Strategy Species listed in the Oregon Conservation Strategy (see Petition to Initiate Rulemaking to Amend OAR 635-050-0070, 2020). OFRI's Wildlife in Managed Forests: American Beaver states,

“...beaver ponds and dams benefit Oregon’s native fish and other wildlife. Beaver dams create ponds that provide fish with protection from strong winter flows. These dams are thought to increase water storage, which results in a more stable water supply. Beavers bring woody structure into the stream, which juvenile fish use to hide from predators. Beaver ponds also help store leaf litter, which helps local insect (macro-invertebrate) production. Beaver dams contribute to improved nesting areas for waterfowl.

Current Law/System: Under current Oregon law beavers have a dual status. On public lands, beavers are classified as a furbearer (ORS 496.004 and OAR 635-050-0050). On private land, beavers are classified as predatory animals (ORS 610.002). Take of beaver on public land requires a permit while take of beaver on private lands is unregulated.

Proposed Change: Industrial timber interests agreed to several regulatory and management changes that will benefit beaver and the ecosystems they help create:

- Forest landowners will report all take of beaver taken (killed) on private forestlands to jurisdictional ODFW offices allowing for better tracking of beaver control activities in Oregon.
- Forest landowners (other than small forestland owners as defined under existing State law) will prohibit commercial trapping on private forestlands.
- Forest landowners will prioritize non-lethal strategies for addressing beaver conflicts.
 - Landowners will identify problem beaver and request ODFW remove beaver via non-lethal strategies. ODFW has 30 calendar days to initiate and complete non-lethal removal methods.
 - After 30 days landowner, at their sole discretion, may choose to lethally remove beaver. In emergency situations where beaver activities are threatening landowner infrastructure (blocking culverts), the landowner, at its sole discretion may: 1) destroy the beaver dam, or 2) lethally remove the beaver.
 - If lethally removed, the landowner must report the removal to ODFW and the justification for removal.
- Beaver research will be incorporated into the OFPA adaptive management strategy.
- The forest industry will participate with ODFW to develop a voluntary beaver relocation program.

¹ <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/15986>, retrieved 10/11/2021

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Discussion: The changes being adopted will increase protection for beaver on private forest lands, create opportunities for beaver introduction on private forest lands and increase understanding of current management activities and future management strategies for beaver. Increased protection for beaver on private forestland will help support habitat for both OFPA target species (salmon, steelhead, bull trout, stream dwelling amphibians) as well as myriad other riparian dependent and associated species.