



May 17, 2024

Members
 California State Assembly
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 2196 (Connolly) – Beaver restoration

Dear Assemblymembers,

On behalf of our organizations, the undersigned write to express strong support for Assembly Bill 2196 by Assemblymember Damon Connolly, whose enthusiasm for the restoration of beavers in California we appreciate and share. We appreciate the unanimous support that AB 2196 has received in the Assembly so far and urge you to vote yes on the floor.

[Beavers are remarkable animals](#) who positively impact the environment in myriad ways, as described well in the findings and declarations provisions in AB 2196. According to [the California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\)](#), “[t]he North American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is both an ecosystem engineer, helping to create and maintain diverse habitat throughout the State, and a keystone species, filling a critically important role in maintaining the ecosystem for the other species that depend on it.”

Rather than repeat the many ecological benefits beavers provide here, we have linked to several recent letters that document the science and practice of beaver restoration and the many benefits available to California both as part of the state’s [Climate Smart](#)

[Strategy](#), reaching our [30x30 biodiversity goals](#), and the California Natural Resource Agency's current efforts to set [Natural and Working Lands targets](#) as part of implementing Assembly Bill 1757 (Garcia C/Rivas R, 2022).

Acting to pursue beavers' many benefits, Governor Newsom and CDFW have, in just the past couple years, rapidly and collaboratively accelerated the momentum for restoring beavers.

- The Governor proposed (January 2022) and the legislature approved (June 2022) the creation of a new beaver restoration program through inclusion of [BCP 3600-071-BCP-2022-MR](#) in the adopted FY 2022-23 budget. CDFW hired five full-time professionals to pursue what is described in the BCP: "to revise beaver policies and guidelines, coordinate restoration efforts, proactively mitigate human-beaver conflict, and work towards relocating beavers into watersheds through consultation with local partners, state and federal agencies, tribes, and non-governmental organizations."
- In June 2023, the CDFW director issued an [updated and modernized beaver depredation policy](#) that recognizes "the ecological benefits of beavers while mitigating conflict over damage to land and property." This new policy: (1) requires CDFW to document all nonlethal measures taken by the landowner to prevent damage prior to requesting a depredation permit; (2) requires landowners to implement feasible nonlethal corrective actions to prevent future beaver damage; (3) requires CDFW to determine whether a property is located within the range of listed species and add permit terms and conditions to protect native wildlife; and, (4) assures that CDFW will continue to prioritize issuing depredation permits in cases of imminent threat to public safety (including flooding or catastrophic infrastructure damage).
- The legislature proposed and the Governor approved (June 2023) inclusion of language in the [FY 2023-24 budget](#) that authorized up to \$2 million of funds previously approved in the Budget Act of 2022 for wetlands and mountain meadow restoration be used by CDFW to "develop a grant process to allocate these funds to pay for non-lethal deterrents to beaver damage to promote coexistence with beavers." CDFW issued an RFP in late 2023, is currently reviewing applications, and plans to execute the grant(s) this spring.
- Working collaboratively with the Maidu Summit Consortium, [CDFW planned and successfully executed the first relocation of beavers](#) in more than seventy-five years in October 2023. A family of seven beavers were relocated to Tásmam Koyóm (located in Plumas County) as part of a pilot program.
- Governor Newsom heralded issuance of a [new Salmon Strategy](#), published in January 2024, which includes a commitment to complete "at least two" more beaver relocation pilots this year, advancing partnerships with Tribal Nations like the [Tule River Tribe](#) and conservation organizations. The strategy includes the following passages:

“Beaver can be important allies in salmon habitat recovery. Salmon and beaver evolved together. Beavers create dams that in many cases allow fish passage while creating deep, cold pools of water that are ideal nurseries for juvenile salmon. For years, salmon restoration programs have supported ‘beaver analog dams,’ where humans add woody debris to North Coast streams to improve salmon habitat. It is time to let nature’s best engineers do some of this restoration work in certain areas around the state.” (at page 16)

“Beavers can help provide breeding and rearing habitat for aquatic species, sustain cold flows during the summer, and reduce erosion and degradation of spawning habitat.” (at page 17)

And it's not just the State of California:

- The federal government is also leaning into the benefits of beaver restoration and relocation, including [USFWS](#), [NOAA](#), [BLM](#), [USFS](#), and other managers of public lands.
- Federal legislation called [the DAMS \(Developing Alternative Mitigation Systems\) Act](#) proposes \$1 million in funding for non-lethal beaver management.
- Last year [Oregon state enacted legislation](#) removing beaver from that state's definition of a “predatory animal,” limiting lethal take, and directing promulgations of new regulations subject to certain criteria.
- A [bill introduced last month in the state of Washington](#) pursues similar objectives as California, with findings noting that that “beavers are a keystone species that provide habitats and resources that other species, including salmon, steelhead, trout, [waterfowl](#), shorebirds, deer, elk, songbirds, bats, cougars, bears, and amphibians need to survive.”
- The private sector is supportive of beaver restoration too. [Google partnered with leading scientists](#) to use machine learning to develop satellite imagery that identifies beaver habitat.

Our organizations work as practitioners, land managers, farmers, advocates, and in other ways to collaborate with CDFW on this effort to restore beavers. While in some cases [beavers will return on their own to areas they once inhabited](#), relocation is also a key part of the restoration strategy – along with coexistence, habitat enhancement and expansion, and [process-based mimicry](#). To help ensure that the full complement of California's efforts associated with beaver restoration remains a state and CDFW priority beyond the current beaver-believing Administration, it is important and valuable to codify the core activities described in the BCP that created the beaver restoration program at CDFW. We appreciate that AB 2196 pursues this objective. AB 2196 ensures that the leadership and effort of the last few years will continue and ensures a legacy for the Governor of a new and enduring chapter of ecological leadership.

We urge your support for AB 2196.

Sincerely,

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