10/31/2019

To: **ODFW Commissioners**

From: **Steve Trask**

Senior Fish Biologist for Bio-Surveys, LLC
and Trask Consulting, Inc.

This is a letter of support for the proposed request to develop a beaver trapping ban pilot project in the Upper Nehalem Basin on ODF managed State lands.

There is a large movement throughout the west that is developing momentum to focus aquatic and riparian recovery funding on restoring beaver to ecosystems where their numbers have been dramatically reduced from what is known to have been much higher historical levels of abundance. Beaver recovery has become one of the primary goals of both Federal and State recovery planning documents for both restoring ecosystem processes and for the recovery of listed salmonid species.

In the steep coastal watersheds of Oregon, the loss of large wood and the reduction in the abundance of Beaver dams that provide water storage, low velocity refugia and the capacity to store forest nutrients that benefit a complex food web have crippled our aquatic corridors for the production of not only salmonids but a vast array of other wildlife species.

Our firm has been providing technical assistance to watershed councils and agencies now for 31 years. Our focus has been entirely on the restoration of ecosystem function that trickles down to the provision of healthy, productive and self-sustaining stream networks for our precious populations of anadromous fish species. After all this time it has become clear to many of us working on the ground in the biological arena that the recovery of system function will remain unachievable without the assistance of all of the key players that originally formed the ecosystems we manage.

Recently, the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and its partners completed NOAA-funded work that furthers the actions called for in the Federal Oregon Coast Coho Salmon recovery plan. This plan, which is to recover the threatened coho salmon, highlights the importance of restoring beaver dam complexes to the landscape for the meaningful recovery of coho salmon. This effort has coalesced into a multi-year funding plan toward beaver recovery in the headwater subbasins of the Nehalem (where the existence of an ancient sea bed provided the low gradient stream networks that beaver prefer for dam building). In 2018-2019, 60 Beaver dam analogues were installed in 7 different subbasins to provide a foundation for beaver colonization. This project will continue to expand into many more subbasins of the Upper Nehalem in the next 10 years. Extensive monitoring to evaluate the efficacy of these installations has been incorporated into the projects goals and objectives. All of the project

sites also include extensive investments in a riparian recovery plan that emphasizes the provision of appropriate food species for beaver.

I'm writing to you not only to highlight the importance of this recovery trajectory as we get closer to the critical aquatic thresholds presented by climate change but to also attempt to convince you of the importance of providing your restoration professionals on the ground with a chance to succeed.

It is my opinion that if beaver continue to be the target of commercial, recreational or pest management trapping, the efforts of a large consortium of restoration partners, agencies and funders will continue to fail to achieve the stated goals of all of our planning documents. We need beaver to prosper to be able to function as the keystone species that we know they are.

We support this proposed ban on ODF lands in the Upper Nehalem Basin (above the confluence of Humbug Cr) as a Pilot Project. We think this area is of significant enough size on the landscape scale to be capable of detecting and quantifying benefit within a 10 year horizon.

Thank you in advance, for your judicious consideration of this request.

Steve Trask