



May 30, 2024

The Honorable Malia Cohen, Chair
The Honorable Eleni Kounalakis, Member
Joe Stephenshaw, Member
California State Lands Commission
100 Howe Avenue, Suite 100 South
Sacramento CA 95825

Submitted via email: slc.commissionmeetings@slc.ca.gov

SUBJECT: June 7, 2024 Meeting - Item 75 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Cohen and Commissioners Kounalakis and Stephenshaw,

We write to recommend that you vote to support Assembly Bill 2196 by Assemblymember Damon Connolly. This simple bill to codify the state's Beaver Restoration Program at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), is just the latest effort to secure the state's long-term commitment to harnessing the many benefits that nature's best ecosystem engineers can provide for climate, drought, wildfire, and biodiversity resilience.

The attached supporter letter signed by more than forty conservation leaders includes relevant background, citations, and rationale for the legislation.

Restoring beavers across California holds special potential for the lands that the State Lands Commission (SLC) manages. With SLC's more than four million acres of tide and submerged lands as well as "the beds of natural navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits," there are many opportunities to leverage beavers' capacity for building and maintaining aquatic habitat. Beavers' dam, canal and burrow building create complexes that increase aquatic habitat extent, diversity, duration and resilience to wildfire and drought as water is held longer into the dry season. Working with beaver is a low cost nature-based solution to improve water quality and quantity, recharge groundwater, store carbon and provide critical habitat for imperiled species including coho salmon, Cascades frog and Willow flycatcher.

What's more, OAEC [has received a \\$2 million grant from CDFW](#) to create a new beaver coexistence program. The project will provide financial and technical support to landowners through a new block grant program and California Beaver Help Desk. We would welcome the opportunity to engage with SLC's land managers to evaluate opportunities to support beaver coexistence on your lands. Please connect us with the key folks on your team.

We appreciate the staff's recommendation and urge you to vote to support AB 2196.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kate Lundquist in black ink on a light gray background.

Kate Lundquist
WATER Institute Director

Handwritten signature of Brock Dolman in black ink on a light gray background.

Brock Dolman
WATER Institute Director

Attachment: AB 2196 Joint Support Letter



May 29, 2024

The Honorable Dave Min
 Chair, Senate Natural Resources & Water Committee
 State Capitol
 Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Chair Min,

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 received in the Assembly and urge your support as well.

[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 earlier this year 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,

Daniel Chandler
Steering Committee Member
350 Humboldt

Katie McCammon
Project Director
350 Sacramento

David Diaz
Executive Director
Active San Gabriel Valley

Adam Burnett
Executive Director
Beaver Institute

Cody Phillips
Staff Attorney
California Coastkeeper Alliance

Melissa Romero
Deputy Legislative Director
California Environmental Voters

Sherri Norris
Executive Director
California Indian Environmental Alliance

Daniel Gluesenkamp, PhD
Executive Director
California Institute for Biodiversity

Rachel Norton
Executive Director
California State Parks Foundation

Redgie Collins
Legal and Policy Director
California Trout

Ryan Henson
Senior Policy Director
CalWild

Hallie Kutak
Staff Attorney and Senior Conservation
Advocate
Center for Biological Diversity

Andria Ventura
Legislative and Policy Director
Clean Water Action

Suzanne Hume
Educational Director & Founder
CleanEarth4Kids.org

Janet Cox
CEO
Climate Action California

Kathy Schaeffer
Legislative Coordinator
Climate Reality Project, San Fernando
Valley Chapter

Jamie Fanous
Policy Director
Community Alliance with Family Farmers

Pamela Flick
California Program Director
Defenders of Wildlife

Ashley Eagle-Gibbs
Executive Director & Legal and Policy
Director
Environmental Action Committee of
West Marin (EAC)

Tom Wheeler
Executive Director
Environmental Protection Information
Center

Bernie Tershy
Co-Founder & Board Member
Freshwater Life

Jann Dorman
Executive Director
Friends of the River

Ana Ruiz
General Manager
Midpeninsula Regional Open Space
District

Nick Joslin
Forest and Watershed Watch Program
Manager
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology
Center

Alicia Marrs
Director of Western Water
National Wildlife Federation

Gerald Meral
Director, California Water Program
Natural Heritage Institute

Brock Dolman & Kate Lundquist
WATER Institute Directors
Occidental Arts & Ecology Center

Kelli DiBene
Manager/Technician
Ohlone Humane Society Wildlife
Rehabilitation Center

Matthew Baker
Policy Director
Planning and Conservation League

Camilla Fox
Executive Director
Project Coyote

Audrey Taub
Executive Director
San Luis Obispo Beaver Brigade

Charna Gilmore
Executive Director
Scott River Watershed Council

Phil Daubenspeck
Chief Investments & Partnerships Officer
Sequoia Riverlands Trust

Jill Tripoli
Director of Animal Care, Mammals
Sierra Wildlife Rescue

Aaron Zettler-Mann
Executive Director
South Yuba River Citizens League

Jacob Kowalick-Allen
Citizen
Swift Water Design

Ellie Cohen
CEO
The Climate Center

Andrew Ellis
Legislative Committee Chair
The Climate Reality Project, LA -
Chapter

Isabella Gonzalez Potter
Associate Director of State External
Affairs
The Nature Conservancy

Arian Dehnaw
Policy Associate
The Pacific Forest Trust

John Davis
Executive Director
The Rewilding Institute

Alexander Funk
Director of Water Resources
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership

Matt Clifford
California Director of Law and Policy
Trout Unlimited

Patrick Koepele
Executive Director
Tuolumne River Trust

Mari Galloway
California Director
Wildlands Network