



To: Minnesota Legislature
Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy

03/25/2024

Sub: Testimony in support of SB 3444 (concerning nonlethal beaver management)

I am Adam Burnett, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Beaver Institute in support of SB 3444. The Beaver Institute works at the intersection of wetland and beaver restoration, providing technical and financial assistance to public and private landowners to mitigate and navigate human-beaver conflicts, supporting scientific research, training professional mitigation, and increasing public awareness and appreciation of the beaver's critical role in creating climate resilient ecosystems. We train beaver wetland professionals through our BeaverCorps program, host six themed National Beaver Working Groups, and host a biennial international conference, BeaverCON.

The North American beaver, *Castor canadensis*, builds dams and wetlands that are among the most biologically productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to coral reefs and rainforests. Beaver benefits include:

- Creating diverse habitats and ecosystems
- Increasing biodiversity
- Promoting salmon/trout recovery
- Regulating stream flows
- Improving water quality, acts as the "Earth's Kidneys"
- Replenishing drinking water aquifers
- Stabilizing the water table
- Repairing eroded stream channels
- Restoring watershed health
- Behaving as buffers against wildfires and drought
- Preventing flooding downstream

Despite these valuable ecological services, beavers sometimes cause landowners significant damage. Fortunately though, cost-effective, long-term, environmentally-friendly and humane options exist to resolve most conflicts. Forward-thinking transportation departments in pockets across the country have successfully employed coexistence techniques to protect infrastructure and prevent flooding from beavers while keeping the animals in place to reap their benefits. Installations like a "pond leveler" can be constructed cheaply from fences and piping to prevent beavers from damming. These interventions are more cost-effective and less time-consuming than the constant trapping and removal of beavers, as once there's a niche in the ecosystem for them, beavers will return and fill it.



The landmark, 20-year-long Billerica (Massachusetts) Beaver Measurement study showed that the non-lethal management of beavers, rather than trapping them, saves taxpayers money and supports robust biodiversity in every ecosystem. In landscapes without beavers throughout the West, beaver-dam analogues (BDAs) are proliferating to recreate the natural systems beavers maintain. In California, funds have been allocated to support beaver restoration by training state biologists in coexistence techniques and incentivizing the construction of BDAs, with the hopes of beavers returning to their historic native range for the self-sustaining, long-term ecosystem services and benefits.

Municipalities and states across North America are embracing the science and economics of beaver-restored habitats. Minnesota State can lead the way by joining them in recognizing and protecting beaver and beaver habitats as a critical tool in climate resilience and ecosystem repair by establishing a non-lethal beaver management program.

Sincerely,

Adam R Burnett

Adam Burnett
executive director
Beaver Institute
beaverinstitute.org
adam@beaverinstitute.org / 917.705.2580