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Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair  
Senator Alan Olsen, Vice Chair  
Senator Cliff Bentz, Member  
Senator Floyd Prozanski, Member  
Senator Arnie Roblan, Member  
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Dear Sirs:

I am writing today in support of SB 1025 relating to the commercial harvesting of clams. We have a real problem in Tillamook Bay with the over harvesting of clams by commercial interests.

I am a fourth-generation property owner in Rockaway beach, and fishing, clamming and crabbing has been part of our family traditions for over 100 years. I can remember fishing and clamming with my grandparents and parents then enjoying the results of our harvest at family dinners. Clams always seemed abundant and easy to find, even for the smallest child.

Sadly, that is no longer the case in Tillamook Bay. In the past five years, the commercial shellfish harvesters have moved in and are taking every mollusk they can find. We have always had divers harvesting clams, and they did not seem to deplete the resource. But recently we have seen a large number of land-based commercial harvesters who have totally raked all the sand bars taking every clam they could find.

After they decimated the cockles, they moved on to Gaper, or Blue clams. This is the part that is truly horrifying. If I go out and dig gapers, I am required to keep the first 12, regardless of size or condition. The commercial harvesters are "high-grading" the gapers and discarding the small and medium clams on the bay floor where they are immediately consumed by crab. One day, I was out crabbing and the water was so clear, I could see the bottom of the bay, it was completely carpeted with dead clam shells. I could not believe my eyes. I contact ODFW about this, describing the lack of clams on the sand bars, and the waste of gapers, imploring them to survey the resource and was told they complete clam surveys on a rotational basis, about every ten years.

A letter from ODFW Director Curt Melcher drafted for Senator Betsy Johnson to send to her constituents stated that 85 to 90 percent of all commercial clam harvesting is done in Tillamook Bay. With that kind of pressure, the department should be doing more frequent clam surveys in this heavily used area. I do not want the problem to move down the road to another estuary, we need to protect all of Oregon's natural resources. I'm aware of the problem in Tillamook Bay, but we need rules in place to protect all estuaries from overharvest.

Thank you for your consideration, please vote to approve SB 1025.

Barbara Trout