



OREGON SHORES CONSERVATION COALITION

March 17, 2021

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Submitted via Oregonlegislature.gov:

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Testimony/SEE>

**Re: SCR 17, Establishing environmental justice framework of principles for Oregon.
Testimony of the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition**

Dear Chair Beyer and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

On behalf of the Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition and its members (collectively “Oregon Shores”), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SCR 17. Oregon Shores is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the Oregon coast’s natural communities, ecosystems, and landscapes while preserving the public’s access to these priceless natural treasures in an ecologically sustainable manner. Our mission includes assisting people to participate in land use, policy, and regulatory decision-making processes with the potential to impact coastal communities, including land use, water quality, hazards, and shoreline management issues. For half a century, we have played an active role in defending our state’s coastal region. Climate change is already affecting every aspect of the coastal environment, and thus impacts every aspect of Oregon Shores’ organizational work and programs. For the reasons discussed below, we strongly urge the Committee to adopt SCR 17, which will establish an environmental justice framework to guide statewide standards of practice when addressing the climate, environmental, and racial justice crises facing Oregon.

Our coastal counties and cities are frontline communities in the climate crisis. Currently, many roads, homes, buildings, and critical infrastructure (such as hospitals, fire stations, and water supply) are set just a few feet above sea level, and thus prone to flooding due to sea level rise, coastal erosion, and increased landslides, as well as to the effects of earthquakes and

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tsunamis due to tectonic causes.¹ Climate change is already affecting every aspect of the coastal environment, and thus impacts every aspect of Oregon Shores' organizational work and programs. Further, as recognized in Oregon's updated Climate Change Adaptation Framework ("CCAF"), climate change is a "stress multiplier" that exacerbates existing political, economic, social, and environmental inequities in coastal communities.² Frontline, impacted, and traditionally underrepresented communities across Oregon, and certainly on its coast, have often lacked adequate services and infrastructure, which has made those communities more vulnerable to environmental, economic, and public health impacts.³ These compound stressors are clearly revealed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,⁴ as well as by the aftermath of the Labor Day wildfires of 2020.⁵ As Oregon takes on the monumental challenge of meaningfully addressing these impacts (i.e., ensuring that vulnerable communities can "bounce forward" rather than merely "bouncing back"), the needs of historically and disproportionately impacted communities should be centered every step of the way in finding just solutions. If Oregon is to effectively confront the challenges presented by the climate crisis and the historical racism that manifests itself in our time as environmental injustice, state agency decision-making must be based both on the best available ecosystem-based management practices and equity principles.

SCR 17 establishes principles, lays a framework of shared values, and prepares the path forward for future policies and practices based on the right to ethical, balanced, healthy, and responsible uses of land and renewable resources for future generations. It recognizes that the needs and lived expertise of Oregon's Native American governments and tribal communities, Black, Latinx, and other people of color, as well as low income and under-resourced rural and coastal communities, have too often been ignored in decision-making. Please consider the following relating to SCR 17:

- SCR 17 acknowledges the deep interconnections between present environmental and climate crises and historic, structural racial and socioeconomic inequities in the state, and recognizes that the lack of services and disproportionate exposure to environmental and climate hazards faced by many communities in Oregon is a product of exclusion from and unequal access to decision-making processes.

¹ Erin Ross, *Oregon Coastal Towns Confront A Fate Tied to Antarctica's Melting Glaciers*, OPB (Dec. 2019), <https://www.opb.org/news/article/wheeler-oregon-coast-town-antarctica-melting-glaciers-sea-level-rise/>.

²2021 Or. CCAF, 4,

https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/CL/Documents/CLIMATE%20CHANGE%20ADAPTATION%20FRAMEWORK%20and%20Blueprint%2002182021_final.pdf; See also Caitlin E. Werrell, et. al., *Climate Change as Threat Multiplier: Understanding the Broader Nature of the Risk*, 25 Ctr. for Climate & Security (Feb. 2015), https://climateandsecurity.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/climate-change-as-threat-multiplier_understanding-the-broader-nature-of-the-risk_briefer-252.pdf.

³ See 2021 Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint, 2 (Jan. 2021), <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/CL/Documents/Climate-Equity-Blueprint-January-2021.pdf>.

⁴ Nigel Jaquiss, *Employment Claims Show Greatest Economic Damage on Oregon's Coast and for Less Educated Workers*, Willamette Week, (Apr. 27, 2020), <https://www.wweek.com/news/business/2020/04/27/employment-claims-show-greatest-economic-damage-on-oregons-coast-and-for-less-educated-workers/>.

⁵ Robin Morris Collin, Guest Opinion, *Environmental justice will defray risks to communities*, Statesman Journal (Mar. 12, 2021), <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2021/03/12/guest-opinion-environmental-justice-defray-risks-communities/6941064002/>.


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- SCR 17 makes clear all state agencies are responsible to address the health, environmental, economic and climate crises we face, and are accountable to build a just, equitable, and climate resilient future in order to secure health and well-being for all people. This declaration of legislative intent is particularly important for Oregon's coastal communities, where state agencies (such as the Parks and Recreation Department and Department of State Lands) lack explicit criteria to consider climate impacts, cumulative impacts, natural hazards (such as tsunamis, earthquakes, flooding and landslides), and the public's long-term interest in permitting decisions on everything from shoreline protective structures to aggregate mining, logging, fiber optic cables, and fossil fuel infrastructure.
- SCR 17 resolves that Oregon will address environmental pollution on the basis of the right of all people to clean air, safe and affordable drinking water, and protection from climate hazards as well as the sustainable preservation of ecological integrity and the aesthetic, scientific, cultural, and historical values of the natural environment. This is particularly crucial in coastal communities, which in recent decades have faced increased pressure by the fossil fuel industry to establish West Coast export terminals (such as the proposed Jordan Cove LNG terminal and export facility in Coos Bay) as well as drinking water crises as a result of harmful and environmentally unsound forestry practices.
- SCR 17 recognizes that environmental justice requires a regenerative economy based on ecological integrity and restoration, community health protections, equitable partnerships, social justice and full and fair participatory processes, and demands that a regenerative economy be based on consideration of traditional ecological knowledge systems as well as full and fair participation in decision-making by Oregon tribes and other impacted and traditionally underrepresented communities.

For the above reasons, Oregon Shores supports SCR 17 as an important first step to achieving environmental justice in the state. We are grateful to Beyond Toxics and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Eugene/Springfield for their leadership and efforts on SCR 17. Thank you for considering our testimony and for pointing the way toward a just, equitable, and climate-resilient future for Oregon and its coast.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Phillip Johnson
Executive Director
Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition
P.O. Box 33
Seal Rock, OR 97376
(503) 754-9303
phillip@oregonshores.org