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Joint Committee on Ways & Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

March 23, 2021

Dear Senator Kathleen Taylor, Representative Jeff Reardon and members of the Committee,

The South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve is located in the Coos estuary where it provides valuable public recreation and learning opportunities for Oregon residents and visitors, as well as conducts important monitoring and research to better understand and manage coastal watersheds and estuaries.

I am pleased to support Senate Bill 5539 because it provides necessary operational funding for the Department of State Lands, including the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve.

South Slough Reserve is the only reserve of its kind on the west coast. It provides a multitude of outdoor recreational and educational experiences for Oregonians. As a teacher, I take my class on field trips to the South Slough multiple times per year where my students get to experience science in the field. Furthermore, the South Slough provides Oregon teachers with professional development in the areas of science, conservation, and watershed that we can take back to the classroom. Oregon teachers cannot find this type of hands-on training anywhere else. As a rural teacher at a Title I school, I can attest to the fact that opportunities for my students are limited and South Slough grants my students the opportunity to experience the outdoors.

The Reserve goes beyond supplying the K-12 system with student learning opportunities. They also provide high-quality day camps to all kids in our community and beyond. Last year my son was able to participate in a day camp experience. He learned about our local watersheds, salt marshes, water quality, and more. It is amazing to see our youth learn about conservation and create ways to help our watersheds through understanding.

I encourage the Committee to pass SB 5536 to continue support of the South Slough Reserve and its important work.

Sincerely,

Cristina Bettsworth  
Third Grade Teacher and Parent