



OREGON SHORES
CONSERVATION COALITION

May 5, 2021

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

Written testimony submitted via Oregonlegislature.gov:
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Testimony/SEE>

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

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Helm and Brock Smith and members of the House Energy and Environment Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing on SCR 17, and thanks for considering these comments favoring the resolution.

The Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition commented more extensively on SCR 17 when it was under consideration in the Senate. We incorporate those comments by reference—we presume that testimony to the Senate is available to you, but will also attach a copy to the e-mail conveying these comments—and will thus keep these additional comments brief.

I am commenting as executive director of Oregon Shores, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the Oregon coast's natural communities, ecosystems, and landscapes while preserving the public's access to these special places in an ecologically sustainable manner. We are currently celebrating our 50th anniversary year. For five decades we have worked to uphold public access to and along the beach; preserve the environmental quality of Oregon's shoreline; and to support and empower all people to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes impacting their coastal communities.

We do our best to serve the public interest of all Oregonians in our public beaches and coastal and marine resources. We have always intended to be inclusive. But we also recognize that we could do more to incorporate an environmental justice perspective within our work, and to make sure we connect with all coastal communities and populations—and those throughout the state that are concerned about the coast—and understand their needs and views.

We strongly support SCR 17 because it represents an effort to do more to incorporate an environmental justice focus in state-level decision-making where environmental policy and natural resource management are concerned. It also strengthens the state's commitment to address climate change issues in all decisions, which also needs to be a constant effort in Oregon and everywhere.

SCR 17 is a valuable statement of principles that will help to guide Oregon in positive steps in these areas that will improve or natural resource management, a step toward results that will be both more inclusive and more far-sighted. It 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.

The resolution is supported by conservation and social justice organizations throughout the state, and we all share basic concerns. We won't try to reiterate all the fundamental arguments that have been made in favor of the resolution, but will speak just to the coastal aspects.

We are very conscious that more needs to be done to engage tribal, Latinx/Hispanic, and low-income populations among coastal residents in decision-making that affects their communities and addressing environmental impacts that affect them. We are working to incorporate this focus in our own work, and see SCR 17 as a commitment by the state as a whole to work in the same direction.

Coastal communities and residents are also on the front lines when it comes to climate impacts, literally where sea level rise, erosion, and increased storm surges are concerned. These impacts are direct, but also social. Climate change is a "stress multiplier" that exacerbates existing political, economic, social, and environmental inequities in coastal communities.

It is therefore particularly important to us that 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. It 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 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

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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.

Water is one of our most basic needs, and is threatened by climate change and environmental pollution. Oregon must invest in protecting water for community drinking water, wildlife survival, and agricultural needs. SCR 17 calls out for Oregon state leaders to acknowledge that "Water is Life," and to make investments in safe and affordable drinking water, watershed protection and water infrastructure to safeguard the water on which we currently depend.

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.

This resolution recognizes that the lack of services, access to safe essential infrastructure, and disproportionate exposure to environmental pollutants and natural hazards faced by many communities in Oregon, including coastal communities, is a product of exclusion from and unequal access to decision-making processes, and is consistent with Oregon's new Climate Equity Blueprint.¹

Oregon Shores urges your support for SCR 17. It is 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, appearing to read "Phillip Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phillip Johnson
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¹ See 2021 Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint, 2 (Jan. 2021), <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/CL/Documents/Climate-Equity-Blueprint-January-2021.pdf>.

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