

As a chef working on the Oregon Coast, I can attest to the painful reality that is a commitment to local seafood. Surrounded by the bounty of ocean and rivers, one naturally expects that bounty to be readily accessible at restaurants and wholesale and retail markets. This expectation collides with the reality of imported and trucked-in fish. A small percentage of this fish does indeed originate in our region, but is first shipped out to be processed and sold, only then to return to our tables after its frustratingly circuitous and expensive route through the supply chain. This meager consolation is the exception to the rule, and the vast majority of what makes it to our fish counters and dining tables doesn't hold even that tenuous connection to local waters.

House Bill 2909 will help solve this problem by helping smaller purchasers have the resources and infrastructure they need to pool buying power. This will help acquire cold storage space for smaller customers to purchase, process and sell our local bounty right here on the coast. Right now 90 percent of the seafood served on the Oregon Coast isn't landed locally. Shifting that paradigm just 10 percent would create an estimated \$90 million in additional economic benefit to coastal communities.

The realities of restaurant and retail work demand a consistent and readily available supply of product. It has been my experience that the obstacles to sourcing local fish are prohibitively high for many buyers to sustain, let alone build from the ground up, these relationships and local distribution chains. The desire to source local fish is certainly there - we as chefs and buyers know that our local waters are special - but what is simply not there is the capacity to build the distribution network required for this sourcing. Oregon Coast Visitors Association is readily positioned to help connect the individuals so we can leverage group buying and processing power.

The recent energy directed to establishing food hubs, shared-use processing facilities and related infrastructure has tapped into this common desire to source locally. My transition from the world of food prep (restaurant chef and prepared foods manager) to more broadly food systems work (kitchen and storage manager at a local food hub) has opened my eyes to this seismic shift in collective energy. The coalition of producers, buyers, economic development organizations, for- and non-profit entities, and more is making local food a real possibility like it hasn't been in modern times. In the past the work has overwhelmed; now the collective will is there, the hurdles are surmountable, and with the right funding the work can continue.