



OREGON SHORES  
CONSERVATION COALITION

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Oregon State Legislature

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2903, which affirms Oregon's system of marine reserves and mandates implementation of recommendations by the Ocean Policy Advisory Council that will strengthen the system and take it to the next level.

The marine reserve system is already an Oregon success story. In approximately a decade (depending on which reserve), the marine reserves have demonstrated their worth. They have proven highly popular with both the statewide and coastal populations. Awareness of the reserves and of Oregon's marine resources among Oregonians and coastal visitors has increased dramatically. The reserves are a draw for both visitors and volunteers—nearly 13,000 individuals, many of them from our organization's CoastWatch program, have engaged in some form of citizen science helping to monitor the reserves and gather data about them. The reserves have contributed to research in important ways, and protected habitat, while having little to no impact on the state's fishing industry.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Marine Reserves Program has engaged many partners in monitoring and managing the reserves, from scientists and other experts, to the fishing community, to local communities and businesses on the coast. More and more Oregonians are developing a strong sense of connection to these places, and through them to Oregon's nearshore ocean.

The marine reserves, at a modest cost, are a significant investment in Oregon's future. They will continue to be vital to marine research, providing all-important comparison areas for studies of the nearshore ocean and its resources. Studies in the reserves will contribute knowledge to fisheries management, and help to track the effects of climate change (such as ocean acidification and hypoxia), invasive species, and population shifts (such as those caused by the epizootic of sea star wasting syndrome). And all the while, the reserves will contribute to the resilience of marine ecosystems by providing protected habitat areas.

Maintaining the benefits of the marine reserves is clearly in Oregon's best interests. But the bill does more than that. It requires implementation of a set of recommendations from the Ocean Policy Advisory Council, which are in turn based on a thorough analysis of the reserve system to date by researchers associated with Oregon State University. These recommendations call for

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development of an adaptive management plan, which will lead to careful, ongoing analysis of the reserves, their effects, and the research they are making possible. An adaptive management plan will assure management that maximizes the benefits of the reserves, and also assure the continued engagement of coastal communities and stakeholders in assessing the functioning of the reserves and the value they are delivering for Oregonians. With this legislation, the reserves' second decade will build and improve upon the first.

We urge your support for HB 2903, both in committee and in advocating for bill has it continues through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Phillip Johnson, Conservation Director  
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