

February 9, 2023

Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use,
Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court Street, NE, H-490



RE: House Bill 2903, Oregon Marine Reserve Program

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee:

As a coastal resident and on behalf of Friends of Otter Rock Marine Reserve we enthusiastically support HB 2903. The bi-partisan supported bill will allow Oregon to carry out the recommendations of the statutorily mandated assessment of the Marine Reserve program. The assessment carried out by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon State University incorporated data from 10 years of ecological monitoring of the status and changes to ocean health, including hook and line surveys, SCUBA diving, roving monitors, stationary monitoring devices and human dimension surveys. Continuing this important work is essential both to our understanding of potential threats to this economically and socially valuable territory and to our ability to craft management and mitigation strategies that preserve the biodiversity and the rich abundance of harvested organisms.

The Otter Rock Marine Reserve, along with the Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve was the first in Oregon to receive Marine Reserve designation. Both Reserves have the distinction of being formed with the full involvement of the fishing community. I participate with Friends of Otter Rock Marine Reserve which is a group of community members with a conservation mission similar to that of the other Marine Reserve community groups. The Synthesis Report found that the Otter Rock Marine Reserve is a living laboratory for shallow water species and has the greatest diversity of algae and sea grass among the Reserves. Marine Reserve status has made it possible for community groups like ours to enact programming to connect with visitors in a manner that can instill a sense of excitement and stewardship for these diverse and fragile environments. The parklands surrounding the Reserves host millions of visitors each year providing hundreds of millions of dollars to coastal businesses. Every day coastal residents like me are able to enjoy the magnificent beauty and fascinating wildlife.

By carrying out the recommendations of the OSU research group, HB 2903 will help keep our coastal waters and wildlife safe, diverse, abundant, and beautiful.

Sincerely,

Dennis White, President
Friends of Otter Rock Marine Reserve