

March 14, 2023

To: Oregon Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation
From: Robert Bailey
Subject: TESTIMONY on HB 3382

Chairs Gorseck and McLain:

My name is Robert Bailey. I currently live in Albany but grew up in North Bend within sight of Coos Bay. I worked for nearly 40 years on estuaries and other aspects of Oregon's coastal resources, beginning as a planner in Coos County where I staffed the very first Coos Bay Estuary Plan and, much later, as the Manager of the Oregon Coastal Management Program in the Department of Land Conservation and Development where I worked with local governments, state and federal agencies, scientists, watershed associations and many stakeholders on all aspects of estuary protection and management.

From the late 1800s through the mid-1970s Oregon's biologically rich estuaries were nearly destroyed by filling, dredging, and other insults. They still bear the scars of those actions. You wonder why Oregon's coastal salmon are in trouble? Look no further than the loss of 90% of vital wetlands in Coos Bay and other estuaries to filling and dredging before the state took action to protect the remainder. Governor Tom McCall understood this peril when in October of 1970 he called for an end to these destructive practices:

"What we allow to happen in our estuaries – in filling the essential tidelands, in covering over the oyster beds or the clams, in allowing for pollution of the waters, in restricting the flushing action that is so vital – when we allow these things to happen it probably reflects better than anything else our willingness to tolerate degradation of the rest of our environment. And when we call a halt to this we can feel we're well on the road to improving our livability and placing the condition of our environment high on our list of goals we are determined to achieve

Oregonians, including coastal leaders and citizens heard and heeded his words. Two of Oregon's 19 statewide planning goals focus on estuaries: Goal 16, Estuarine Resources, and Goal 17 Coastal Shorelands. These goals resulted from the recommendations of a legislatively-created coastal commission comprised of coastal leaders, businesses and citizens who recognized that Oregon was on the brink of losing the remainder of its precious estuarine resources. Since those goals were adopted in 1977, local governments, state agencies, federal agencies, watershed councils, port districts, scientists, fishermen, oyster growers, and many others have used them to create effective land use plans for each estuary. Two of those plans, one for Coos Bay and one for Yaquina Bay, are currently being modernized to account for new habitat information and foreseeable demands for estuarine shorelands.

HB 3382 is an insult to the thousands of people who have worked hard and in good faith to bring Oregon's estuaries back from the brink of destruction and return them to ecological health while allowing appropriate development. SB 3382 would make a mockery of Oregon's land use planning program and would recklessly endanger these priceless public resources. Shame on the Oregon Public Ports Association for promoting this bill to end-run the state's proven protections for these resources that belong to all and to future generations. Please give HB 3382 the quick, painless burial it deserves.