

Testimony for HB 5506

Joint Ways and Means Committee Meeting Newport 4-14-23

- Thank you for providing these community meetings throughout the state.
- My name is Dennis White, I live in Depoe Bay and work with Friends of Otter Rock Marine Reserve and I am testifying in support of the Marine Reserve Program.
 - Friends of Otter Rock is an organization of local residents who volunteer their time in the parkland adjacent to the Otter Rock Marine Reserve.
 - Our primary activity is training volunteers and high-school interns who devote time each week in the summer to interact with visitors with the goal of discovering why they have come and connecting them with related stories; stories that can elevate their excitement and inspire stewardship. Interpretive topics cover subjects like whales, geology, tide pools, kelp, the ecosystem, and tribal history. This is our small way of helping to carry out Oregon's Land Use Planning Goal 19: "to conserve the long-term values, benefits, and natural resources of the nearshore ocean and the continental shelf"
 - These parklands bordering the reserves provide tremendous benefit to Oregon residents in general as well as the local residents who daily enjoy this landscape and the teeming wildlife that is here. I would also point out that the yearly millions of visitors who are not local residents provide hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economies.
- I wish to address two specific items.
 - First, the Department of Fish and Wildlife Community Engagement Project Leader. This position has been removed from the proposed budget and we would like to see it restored. The position is the connecting point between the communities and the science carried out by ODFW and others. The five marine reserve community groups can do their jobs better with the accurate communication, guidance, and coordination that this position can provide.
 - Second, it is important to fund the continuation of the ODFW Marine Reserve division as outlined in HB 2903.
 - ODFW's 10 years of research has provided valuable information about biodiversity, abundance, and the health of the ocean.
 - But the work has just begun. 10 years is only a blip on the timeline necessary to measure ocean health and its trajectory.
 - Only by continuing the work of ODFW and their collaborators is there any hope of detecting problems and opportunities that form the basis for steps toward climate resilience.
 - I urge you to reinstate the Project Leader and to follow the recommendations of the bipartisan-supported 10-year review of the Marine Reserve program by adopting the budget recommendation in HB 2903 and continuing to support this critical investment in our future.