

Submitter: Susan Nolte
On Behalf Of: Future Generations
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB3382

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 3382
May 15, 2023

Dear Sir or Madam Representative:

I am writing to ask you to oppose HB 3382.

It appears that this bill would enable various entities to dredge in coastal and estuary waters without sufficient oversight. Irreparable damage would be created in these sensitive areas, disrupting wildlife species by destroying habitat and food sources, and creating widespread damage to riparian and oceanic ecosystems.

Estuaries provide critical habitat to migrating salmon (an economically important species both commercially and recreationally), tens of thousands of resident and migrating birds (which attract tourists to local towns) and mammals ranging from river otters to elk.

Passing this bill would set a dangerous precedent that would allow corporate interests to bypass Oregon's environmental protection law. Dredging removes aquatic grasses that are crucial as nurseries for young fish and other aquatic species. I believe there was a recent episode on Oregon Field Guide which entailed the use of Eel grass to mitigate the effects of ocean acidification (eel grass and kelp beds sequester carbon). Consider this statement from the NOAA Fisheries website: Eelgrass provides a number of important ecosystem functions, including foraging areas and shelter to young fish and invertebrates, food for migratory waterfowl and sea turtles, and spawning surfaces for species such as the Pacific herring. By trapping sediment, stabilizing the substrate, and reducing the force of wave energy, eelgrass beds also reduce coastal erosion. In fact, eelgrass forms the base of a highly productive marine food web.

I think you would agree that this is a resource we should be protecting!

Also, HB 3382 would weaken Oregon's integrated Coastal Management Program under the Coastal Zone Management Act which has served for over 50 years in balancing protection and development. This bill would jeopardize on-going efforts to update Oregon's estuary management plans.

We absolutely need to put stewardship of these areas first and foremost. Short term economic gain (dredging) spells long term disaster. Let's plan for future generations. Our coastal and riparian waters and adjacent lands are lovely and precious and should be kept intact forever and for all.

Thank you so much for your attention and please just scuttle this bill.

Sincerely,
Susan Nolte, DVM

Lee Grunes