

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

February 6, 2024

I am very supportive of HB 4132 addressing the Oregon Marine Reserve Program. It is an essential next step in Oregon's efforts to maintain healthy marine ecosystems. The scientists involved in monitoring and reporting over the last decade have done excellent work in answering the questions necessary to continue the program and direct management of coastal resources.

The original process of designating the five marine reserves was an arduous task for many coastal stakeholders. I recall the push-back in my community to the idea of restricting extraction of resources from anyplace along the coast. I understand the sentiment as with anything that is as complex a subject as marine ecosystems. As a retired biology educator in the Coos Bay area, I have used our local ocean habitat (estuarine) as a teaching platform for our next citizens. They need the basics in understanding the natural systems that support life in general and their resources that support us as well. Ecology, the study of the relationships between physical factors and biological communities is difficult for terrestrial ecologists. The marine environment is much more difficult and is the richest biological system on the planet. The Marine Reserves Program is an excellent strategy to make sure that we focus on this extremely important area of sustaining resources.

More than a decade after 2012, when the first Oregon marine reserves were recommended by the Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC), I hear little opposition to marine reserves that existed back then. And, statewide and coastal approval is strong for this program. Much collaboration has grown in the last 10-11 years between agencies like the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), fishermen, citizen scientists, and coastal volunteers to monitor these sites. I was appointed to OPAC in 2016 and have been kept updated by ODFW's staff, community volunteers, and now ODFW and OSU have provided a report and an analysis respectively of the decade of marine reserves in Oregon. Their recommendations were endorsed by OPAC. The Coastal Caucus has also endorsed these outcomes with their own recommendations which ensure involvement of the stakeholders via the Oregon way. And for this biology educator, their recommendation that "...commercial and recreational fishers, are included in marine reserves science and that marine reserves present useful science to these communities," is particularly valuable.

HB 4132 will not only further the biological understanding of Oregon's Marine Reserves, but also monitor the social, economic, and cultural dimensions of the communities affected by marine reserves. That is the Oregon way. Thank you for the opportunity for input.

Sincerely,



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