



January 29, 2025

Chair Golden and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

Re: SB795 – Support

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to protecting Oregon's beaches and coastal environments. Through grassroots efforts, we organize volunteer-led cleanups across the state to address marine debris, including pollution from inadequate regulation. Our work involves collaboration with community volunteers, local waste haulers, and other stakeholders to restore and protect our beaches and watersheds.

A major challenge we currently face is cleaning up polystyrene dock debris from deteriorating oyster farm docks in Yaquina Bay. While our volunteers are eager to help, securing disposal options has been difficult. For years, Surfrider Foundation has partnered with local waste haulers who donated their services. However, the lack of enforcement around marine debris laws, particularly concerning dilapidated aquaculture structures, has led haulers to hesitate in continuing their donation. With high disposal costs, they've made it clear that neither grassroots organizations nor their businesses should bear the burden, and polluters should be held accountable. This has been a barrier to our cleanup efforts in Lincoln County, where polystyrene pollution is widespread adjacent to oyster operations.

However, this problem extends beyond Yaquina Bay. The challenges of enforcement, compliance, and cleanup related to permitted infrastructure and vessels along our waterways and submerged lands have burdened communities, land managers, ports, and public beaches for decades. From the Submerged Land Enhancement Fund to the Abandoned and Derelict Vessel (ADV) Task Force, Surfrider has repeatedly come to the legislature with impacted stakeholders and groups to strengthen strategies and tools for addressing these persistent pollution challenges.

SB795 offers an improvement to challenges like these. By strengthening enforcement of regulations surrounding ADVs, the bill would provide the Department of State Lands with the tools needed to address these issues efficiently. The proposed changes—such as allowing agencies to remove debris without prior notice, creating an offense for abandoning a vessel, and expanding enforcement options—would ensure that polluters are held accountable for their waste, relieving the burden on community groups and volunteers.

We strongly support SB795 and commend the Legislature for taking action on this issue. We are hopeful that this legislation will improve cleanup efforts and reduce avoidable pollution, ensuring that Oregon's beaches and waterways are protected from marine debris. We look forward to continuing our work with the state and other partners to safeguard Oregon's coast.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Wolf".

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