

Submitter: Helen Welch

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

I have been an "Oregon coast watcher" and supporter for 3 years. I am writing to ask that you please support HB 3580, and our invaluable eelgrass meadows. This bill offers a great opportunity to support biodiversity, coastal economies, and increase resilience to a changing climate.

Oregon's underwater eelgrass meadows are biodiversity hotspots, carbon sinks, and nursery habitat to many juvenile fish species. Their health is vital for sustaining our fisheries, maintaining water quality, and buffering against climate impacts. However, there are signs these essential habitats are in decline in Oregon. I personally have seen and photographed a concerning increase in the amounts of eelgrass lifted from sea beds and deposited on Cape Meares spit over the last 3 years. HB 3580 would set up a Taskforce to set conservation targets through a collaborative effort involving agencies, Tribes, scientists, local communities, and others. This bill is the first essential step to proactively prevent habitat loss before it's too late.

Thank you for your work

Helen Welch