

February 28, 2025

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Uses,
Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301



**SEVEN CAPES
BIRD ALLIANCE**
Working Together for Birds and Nature

Re: HB 3587

Dear Chair Honorable Ken Helm:

The Seven Capes Bird Alliance supports House Bill 3587, the Rocky Habitat Stewardship Bill. This bill provides a much-needed investment in the management of Oregon's amazing and vital nearshore marine environment. Our mission at Seven Capes is to encourage residents and visitors to protect and enjoy native birds, other wildlife, and habitats found on Oregon's coast.

In fulfillment of that mission, we worked to have two rocky habitat areas designated as Marine Conservation Areas. The Land Conservation and Development Commission unanimously approved that these two sites, as well as six other locations, be added to the inventory of designated sites within the Rocky Habitat Management Strategy. That Strategy now recognizes 22 areas along the Oregon coast that merit site-specific management as one of three designation types: marine conservation area, marine education area, and marine research area. It is anticipated additional sites will be designated in the future.

Oregon's rocky habitats comprise 41% of Oregon's coastline and support a wealth of marine life from colonial nesting seabirds, marine mammals, fish, and invertebrates. Rocky intertidal areas, including tidepools, are home to abundant and diverse biological communities where sea stars, anemones, crabs, and colorful algae offer people amazing opportunities to connect with marine life up close.

Recent studies indicate Oregon's rocky habitats are in danger of ecological collapse. Climate impacts from increasing marine heat waves as well as changes in ocean currents are impacting rocky habitats. Ecological imbalances that may be driven, in part, by climate change have resulted in nearly two-thirds of kelp habitat no longer supporting kelp forests that create complex rocky habitat for a multitude of species providing ecosystem services. The growing number of visitors exploring tidepools and other rocky habitats is an additional stressor.

The Rocky Habitat Management Strategy seeks to balance protection with the enjoyment and responsible use of rocky habitats. One of the ways the Strategy seeks to accomplish this goal is to provide opportunities for community groups to participate in the management and stewardship of specially designated rocky habitat sites. Up and down the Oregon coast, community groups, like Seven Capes, are volunteering hundreds of hours to act as stewards, inform visitors how to responsibly interact with nesting seabirds and marine mammals, share the beauty of tidepool life, and engage the public in community science. Current agency and community capacity is; however, insufficient to fully implement the Strategy.

House Bill 3587 directs the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to collaborate with community partners to develop and implement site management plans for designated rocky habitats. HB 3587 also provides competitive small grants that foster innovative and community-driven conservation efforts supporting rocky habitat. Together, we can leverage a modest investment in state agencies through collaboration with community groups to fully implement the Strategy to meet the pressing need for effective conservation of Oregon's rocky habitat ecosystems.

Our members care deeply about our coastline and the many types of marine life dependent on well-managed rocky habitats. We urge you to support HB 3587, ensuring these cherished habitats endure and remain accessible to all Oregonians now and for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dawn Villaescusa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

dawn villaescusa, President
Seven Capes Bird Alliance
dawnv@sevencapes.org