

Submitter: Susan Mates

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

Dear Co-chair Helm, Co-chair Owens, and members of the committee,

Please support both HB 3580 and HB 3587. Our rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows are in a state of crisis. Each bill offers a great opportunity to support chances for their survival: enhancing biodiversity, coastal economies, and increase resilience in a changing climate.

We rely on Oregon's underwater eelgrass meadows. They create the nursery habitat for many juvenile fish species, as well as being carbon sinks and biodiversity hotspots. If the eelgrass meadows are healthy, it helps maintain water quality and ameliorates climate effects - as well as sustaining our Oregon fisheries. Eelgrass meadows are in trouble, though. HB3580 would be an essential move to preventing their loss before it's beyond help.

Oregon's rocky habitats like Haystack Rock are sad vestiges of what they were when I first moved to Oregon in 1979. Human disturbance as well as increased climate impacts have degraded them immensely and threaten their ability to provide habitat for millions of nesting birds, marine mammals, fish and invertebrates. HB 3587 would provide needed agency coordination to better protect these sites and pursue best practices to enjoy these places while minimizing disturbance to sensitive wildlife and habitats. Haystack Rock has been an iconic image to attract tourists. Please protect it before it becomes an empty photograph of what was once there.

We need to act now to protect our coastal ecosystems. These two bills would require a modest investment, and in return allow both eelgrass meadows and rocky habitats to be conserved for the future.

Sincerely,  
Susan Mates