

Submitter: Jessica Christopher
On Behalf Of: HB 3580
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,

I am writing to urge you to support HB 3580 and HB 3587, two critical bills that will help safeguard Oregon's rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows—some of the most vital and vulnerable ecosystems along our coast. These bills present a unique opportunity to protect biodiversity, bolster coastal economies, and build resilience in the face of climate change.

Oregon's eelgrass meadows are more than just underwater plants; they are nurseries for young fish, natural carbon sinks, and key to maintaining healthy fisheries and clean water.

As someone who cherishes Oregon's coastline, I have spent countless hours exploring its tide pools, walking its windswept beaches, and marveling at the rich marine life that calls it home. Whether watching seabirds nesting along the cliffs, seeing harbor seals basking on the rocks, or simply standing in awe of the natural beauty of places. I am reminded time and time again of how special and fragile these ecosystems are. The health of our coastal habitats is deeply personal to me—not just as a resident of Oregon, but as someone who believes in leaving behind a thriving environment for future generations.

As someone who cherishes Oregon's coastline, it's concerning to see signs that these essential habitats are declining. 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.

HB 3580 takes a proactive approach by establishing a task force to set conservation targets through collaboration with agencies, Tribes, scientists, and local communities. Instead of waiting until these habitats reach a crisis point, this bill helps us act before it's too late.

Likewise, our rocky habitats, from Haystack Rock to Coquille Point, are iconic landmarks that define the beauty and culture of our state. These places are home to an incredible diversity of marine mammals, nesting birds, fish, and invertebrates. Yet, they are under increasing pressure from climate change and human activity. HB 3587 would provide much-needed agency coordination to ensure their protection while also creating a grant fund for local communities to educate visitors on how to enjoy these

areas responsibly—supporting both conservation and local economies.

Now is the time to act. With a modest investment, we can ensure that future generations can experience Oregon's vibrant coastal ecosystems as we do today. Please support these bills and take a stand for the health of our coastal communities, wildlife, and economy.

Sincerely,
Jessica Christopher