

Submitter: Shauna McKain-Storey

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

Eelgrass improves ecosystem health by supporting biodiversity and improving water quality, while it also increases resilience by dampening storm surges, buffering ocean acidification and storing carbon at a rate as much as 35 times that of rainforests. And eelgrass supports Oregon fisheries worth more than \$178 million per year by providing nursery habitat for fish. HB 3580 would develop a task force to convene stakeholders, agencies, tribes, and scientists to recommend eelgrass conservation targets for the state and address gaps and barriers to increased protection and more proactive management of this critical resource. It is essential to act now because eelgrass is disappearing all over the world, threats to its survival are increasing, and there are signs that it is declining in areas like Coos Bay. Infrequent monitoring and insufficient resources mean that the current status of eelgrass meadows in Oregon is unknown. We need to act to protect this vital resource before it is too late, so please support this bill. Thank you.