



COQUILLE INDIAN TRIBE

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March 5, 2025

Dear Chairs Helm and Owens and members of the Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee,

The Coquille Indian Tribe supports HB 3580. We respectfully request that the Committee vote to approve HB 3580 with a do pass recommendation.

Our traditional ways of life including foods, beliefs, ceremony, and culture have been sustained by the Ocean and estuaries since time began. Our people have also cherished and protected southwestern Oregon's natural resources for thousands of years by stewarding and managing the land, water, and species that live here.

Eelgrass meadows, found in estuaries on the South coast, are an important cultural resource. They are nurseries for juvenile fish and shellfish including herring, rockfish, Dungeness crab, and salmon. These habitats filter and improve water quality in our estuaries. Eelgrass meadows underpin entire marine food webs and estuarine ecosystems that support a diversity of life and the Coquille people who continue to steward these resources today.

Eelgrass meadows are declining in the Pacific Northwest, and regions of the South Slough Estuarine Reserve in Coos Bay have seen over a 90% decline in eelgrass over the past decade. Loss of this habitat in our traditional homelands impacts Tribal cultural needs, regional economies, and fisheries. It is critical that we develop a strategy to proactively address threats to this habitat and develop meaningful protections to ensure its survival. To this end, the task force created by HB 3580 will develop conservation and restoration targets and identify policy gaps and barriers to protecting this resource, which are essential first steps to preserving eelgrass meadows.

HB 3580 is significant because it recognizes that Tribes are essential partners in developing a path forward for improving the management of eelgrass resources. Tribes are represented on the Task Force, and must also be consulted. As a sovereign nation, the Coquille Indian Tribe co-manages natural resources with the state to enhance the abundance of fish and wildlife resources for all. Your support of HB 3580 honors and supports our efforts.

Respectfully,

John Ogan

Executive Director- Natural Resources Office

Coquille Indian Tribe