



Dear Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Levy and members of the Joint Committee on Natural Resources,

On behalf of the [Oregon Ocean Alliance](#), whose collective membership represents thousands of Oregonians, we write to express our **strong support for the Department of State Lands (DSL) 2025-27 budget proposal (SB 5539) and ask the subcommittee to please deliver a robust budget for the agency.**

DSL is a critical manager of Oregon's submerged lands and coastal resources, including our estuaries, waterways, and territorial sea. Investing in DSL's programs and staff capacity benefits all Oregonians by allowing the agency to respond to growing uses and development pressures and enforce Oregon's mitigation policies to ensure responsible use of coastal resources. In the wake of federal rollbacks in environmental safeguards and funding to state agencies, it is more important now than ever for the state to ensure Oregon's agencies can continue to responsibly steward our submerged lands and wetlands.

In particular, DSL needs a strong budget for protecting wetlands, waterways, and estuaries, including the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR). The agency also faces enforcement and compliance challenges related to leases of submerged lands, permitting, and regulatory oversight—all of which are critical to addressing proposed development activities such as offshore wind. Responsible management and oversight of our coastal resources is paramount given growing stressors related to climate change; recent losses of our wetlands, kelp, and seagrass meadows; and new information regarding the immense carbon storage of our estuaries and wetlands. There are a few key policy option packages and legislative efforts that address these needs for Oregon's coastal and aquatic environments:

Policy Option Packages in DSL's Budget:

POP Package 202 - Abandoned and Derelict Vessels Program: Allows DSL to implement the Abandoned and Derelict Vessels program, which is necessary to minimize the impact of discharged hazardous materials and navigation hazards associated with derelict vessels. This is essential to protect public safety and clean waterways.

POP Package 201- Wetlands and Aquatic Resource Management: Provides essential staff and programmatic capacity necessary for managing wetlands and aquatic resources across the state. Oregon's wetlands serve as crucial habitats, carbon stores, and natural flood mitigation systems, and their protection requires dedicated resources and personnel.

POP Package 203 and 206 - South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR): Supports the SSNERR program, which is essential for ensuring the continued operation of this

critical reserve. SSNERR provides outdoor education programming and supports decades of estuarine research, needed to understand how our estuaries are responding to the impacts of climate change. Supporting robust funding for this package is essential given potential federal funding cuts to the National Estuarine Research Reserve program and other similar parks and monuments.

Legislative Priorities related to DSL's Budget:

As you're deliberating this budget process, we want to make you aware of our Oregon Ocean Alliance priorities– the Rocky Habitat Stewardship Bill (HB 3587) and the Eelgrass Action Bill (HB 3580), which collectively aim to increase capacity for state agencies, including DSL, to manage these essential coastal habitats. Investing in these bills will help strengthen Oregon's coastal management:

HB 3580 - Eelgrass Action Bill: As an Oregon Ocean Alliance priority and OCN special budget focus area, this bill will allocate \$140K to support a 0.5 FTE (NRS4) position at DSL to contribute policy and estuarine ecology expertise to the Eelgrass Task Force. Eelgrass meadows play a vital role as nursery habitat to juvenile fish and sequester carbon up to 35X the rate of tropical rainforests. State investment in improving the management of this disappearing habitat is essential.

HB 3587 - Rocky Habitat Stewardship Bill: Also an Oregon Ocean Alliance priority and OCN special budget focus area. This bill dedicates \$300K to a small grant fund administered by the Oregon Ocean Science Trust to support coastal communities in stewarding protected rocky habitat sites. With no overhead costs to DSL, this initiative will enhance local conservation efforts and ensure the protection of Oregon's rocky shore ecosystems.

HB 3786 - Blue Economy Bill: This bill allocates \$3 million to the Oregon Ocean Science Trust, administered by DSL, for research initiatives on ocean acidification and hypoxia, coastal erosion, and ecosystem impacts from changing ocean conditions. These research areas are imperative for protecting Oregon's coastal communities and economies.

We urge the Subcommittee to fully fund these essential programs within DSL's 2025-27 budget. DSL's work in managing coastal and submerged lands is vital for the ecological and economic well-being of our state. Strengthening the agency's capacity for enforcement, regulatory oversight, and research and monitoring will also help ensure that Oregon's coastal and aquatic ecosystems remain resilient for generations to come.

Respectfully,

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