

March 19, 2025

Oregon Natural Resource Subcommittee of Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE Salem,
OR 97301

Re: SB 5539 (Support)

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Frederick and Representative Levy

On behalf of the Friends of South Slough Reserve (FOSS), we ask for your enthusiastic support for the full budget of Department of State Lands' (DSL) 2025-27 budget and especially the POP 203 & 206 for South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR):

Our organization provides an important citizen support organization dedicated to the understanding of estuaries, and estuarine function in Oregon with special emphasis on the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR). Our organization has supported the SSNERR since 1988. With this long history, we can testify that the Reserve staff, and its partners are true pioneers in understanding estuarine ecosystems, as SSNERR was the first ever reserve established in the US and just completed its 50th anniversary celebration this past fall. The reserve model is a federal state partnership between NOAA and a state partner and the DSL partner in Oregon is a perfect match in mission. However, the Federal – DSL State partnership does not stop at that level. The Reserve partners include Tribal, other agencies, local schools, Universities, private landowners, and municipalities. Research initiated by the staff at the Reserve has provided essential information about the functioning of coastal ecosystems. The staff and its partners have established long term monitoring and mapping of eelgrass communities throughout the Coos Bay estuary. University partners have collaborated with staff to develop an impressive hydraulic model of the estuary function and are learning more about the nature of carbon transport into and out of the system. They are leading key programs for monitoring, mitigating and managing invasive species. Their research and monitoring efforts have provided valuable information regarding ocean acidification and hypoxia. The Reserve provides not only important research, but the staff provides outstanding educational and interpretive efforts throughout the year. Their summer session classes fill the first day of registration, and the educational impact of not only the students that are part of these but also the interns from across the country and Oregon that work with Reserve staff to learn and assist these efforts and grow the understanding of our coastal ecosystem.

In addition to our support for the SSNERR, we are enthusiastic supporters of the other functions of the DSL. The increased funding is needed for the abandoned and derelict vessel program and the POP 202. We need financial support for DSL to remove vessels and reduce the risks of their harboring invasive species and hazardous materials that can cause major harm to the ecosystems, and to general navigation.

These include the important role in managing submerged lands, including submerged territorial sea lands. The DSL staff and their expertise are essential in protecting the values of our Oregon water and wetland systems.

Finally, we are impressed with the emerging leadership shown by DSL efforts to establish and build the Elliott State Research Forest. This is an exciting opportunity to understand the headwater areas of a watershed, and approach this with a management and learning opportunity within the communities. Already the process of establishing partners and collaborators can serve once again the Oregon Way of moving together.

Thank you again for your support and we look forward to the future achievements of the DSL teams in all these natural resources so important to our sustainable future.

Christine Moffitt, President Board of Directors, Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc.