

Comments Submitted by Mark L. Arnold, South Beach, OR
To House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment Hearing on March 20, 2025
About HB 3814 Relating to Seafood Processors and Water Quality

Thank you for providing an opportunity to comment by a member of a family-owned oyster farm on the central Oregon coast.

Estuaries serve a variety of purposes including commercial growing of shellfish for human consumption, recreational harvesting of shellfish for human consumption, and providing spawning areas for fish and crabs.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Food Safety Program has classified commercial shellfish growing and harvest areas in the following estuaries:

Clatsop Beaches,
Tillamook Bay,
Netarts Bay,
Yaquina Bay,
Umpqua River and Triangle,
Coos Bay, and
South Slough.

I have been helping my son and daughter-in-law start and manage a small family oyster farm in Kings Slough, on the south side of Yaquina Bay in Lincoln County. We have done extensive water quality testing over ten years so the Oregon Department of Agriculture could approve our growing area. In addition, it has required a significant investment of family assets and time to start a small business that, we believe, contributes to the local, coastal community.

The current practices for effluent released by seafood processors in Newport have not caused an adverse impact on the water quality for our oyster growing area. However, if bacteria and other pathogens are released into Yaquina Bay and other estuaries at higher levels than occurs currently, there could be a detrimental impact on our oyster farm as well as on other commercial shellfish growers and recreational harvesters. It is important for commercial and recreational shellfish harvesters that there be no increase in the current levels of bacteria and other pathogens released into estuaries.

To provide additional information for your consideration, I request that you:
Seek input from the Oregon Department of Agriculture with regard to its food safety regulations for growing, harvesting, and selling shellfish for human consumption; and
Seek input from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife with regard to its responsibilities to assure food safety for recreational shellfish harvesters.

When considering HB 3814, I request that you seek to find an approach to balance the concerns of seafood processors with the concerns of others about maintaining shellfish food safety and about maintaining healthy fish and crab spawning areas in estuaries.