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A Non-Profit Organization Since 1997

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Dear Legislators,

Coos Bay Trawlers' Association, Inc. is one of the oldest trawl associations in the state and we write today to express our concern about the upcoming Marine Reserve Bill (Draft Bill LC 149).

We would like to remind you that the trawl sector's fishing grounds have been reduced to about 20% of the EEZ. Almost all of the reductions were brought about by proactive representatives of the trawl industry who approached the Pacific Fisheries Management Council with solutions the council needed to fend off lawsuits filed against them by environmental groups. At that time we had no idea the state would be swayed by those same lawsuit filers to close state waters to establish marine reserves. Most of the areas that the state settled on to create these sites were proposed by those same environmentalists. In Coos Bay, for the second round of discussions after OPAC rejected the Cape Arago/Seven Devils proposals, the Port selected a very fair but broad committee made up completely of all local residents. The outcome was no marine reserve at Cape Arago. Port of Coos Bay Commissioners had the final say and though the meeting was well attended by the citizens of the state, locals were out numbered by at least 3 to 1 by citizens from Portland, Corvallis, Salem, Eugene and Roseburg, the commissioners still chose to go with the recommendation of the committee they had approved to work on this issue.

We would like to remind you that the trawl sector came forward when management realized that they had been over-optimistically managing our fisheries and several species may have been over harvested. The trawl sector initiated a buy-back program to reduce the fleet and those left will be paying the buy-back loan off for the rest of our lives. Still without the historic level of landings supporting our industry and our communities we knew we had to do something about the discard issues. The fleet had to discard more and more fish as management ratcheted down the harvest. So we pressed PFMC to allow us to design a rationalization program which again cut our catch, our time on the water and has caused us to manage our catch with accountability. That program was launched in January 2011.

Our fishermen, their representatives and our fishing communities know that the lack of information (data) about our fisheries creates uncertainties and when there is uncertainty management has to manage conservatively and the more we don't know the more

conservatively they have to manage. Marine reserves were introduced to counter-balance our lack of knowledge of the ocean and the things that live in/on it. A marine reserve is just another band-aid to cover up the fact that we still lack adequate data to manage our fisheries. Our concern is a single issue that I will dramatize below. But the truth is that no marine reserve will increase our knowledge applicable to fishery management. Marine reserves were introduced by the environmental groups as an insurance policy against bad management. But we feel we need to fix the problem and not just stick another band-aid over it. The real problem has been the **lack of adequate funding** for over 20-plus years to accomplish what the Magnuson-Stevens Act laid out for our nation and unless that changes we will always be plagued by the lack of knowledge.

1. The state has been in a financial squeeze for a number of years and has **reduced state budgets** and spending every budget cycle for over a decade. ODF&W's budget has taken reductive hits every time there has been a state budget reduction. ODF&W managers and personnel have been frustrated by the **lack of funding** to carryout even the most mundane science research and data collection activities. These shortfalls in their budget has caused a decrease in abundance, habitat and bottom studies and has had to even use outside "environmental groups" to accomplish the simplest ocean floor mapping for the Territorial Sea Plan revisions. Whale Cove/Boiler Bay has not been studied in depth since it was designated a closed area over 25 years ago because of the **lack of funding**. The **lack of adequate funding** has made ODF&W open to manipulation by outside influences who dangle a purse and say "no strings attached" as long as you do this with the money (they don't stipulate exactly how to spend the money – "no strings" – as long as it is spent on marine reserve, spatial planning, essential fish habitat, or community fishing associations).

Many of our school districts have shortened the school week to four days. Police services have been reduced to skeleton crews. Senior services have been reduced in nearly every county in the state. Unemployment has been overly high for five or more years and Oregonians are still going through foreclosure proceedings. Food stamp programs are maxed out and the Oregon Health plan has reached capacity and is turning away the needy leaving the poor with no choice but to assume high level of personal debt or avoid health care altogether putting their lives on shorten futures. The turn-a-round time for many of these major issues is slower than an Oregon slug and solutions are as direct as the slug's path. As long as there is even one Oregon child that goes to bed hungry we should not be spending one penny on marine reserves or other frivolous pipe dreams. As long as there is one Oregon child suffering a homeless life with little hope of happiness and health we need to resist the out of state influences of the rich, powerful environmental groups.

2. The intellectual debate on the necessity of marine reserves has been clouded by big money and poor examples of fishing activities **presumed** to be conducted on the west coast of the United States. Because of the **lack of financial** support provided by our state government, ODF&W has not had the budget to educate the state's citizens about the true condition of fisheries and the management process. If ODF&W had appropriate budgets for the last 20 years our citizens would know the current conditions of the Oregon territorial sea and would not be so gullible of outside influence. However, that is not the

case. ODF&W has failed to live up to its educational mission because of budget shortfalls and **the lack of knowledge** about our ocean has undermined their confidence to stand up with the truth about our ocean. Furthermore, because the marine reserve movement was started as a "TOP DOWN" process, ODF&W has not had the freedom to speak the truth about the state of the ocean because "their boss", the governor and his staff, were in bed with outside "big money" enviros who were making big promises of lots of jobs and financial incentives if marine reserves were established in Oregon territorial sea.

3. Because of **inadequate budgets** over the years, the state of Oregon has created an atmosphere where our industry experts are demonized by the big environmental industry. Fishermen and their representatives who attend every PFMC meeting, who are on committees that help construct the fishing regulations, who help gather the data used to create the regulations, who make their boats available so scientists can conduct research, who help to ground-truth fishery facts and separate out the fiction, who are out on the ocean more than anyone else, who's parents have also fished and have shared the stories over time of ocean conditions, their combined knowledge is trumped by environmental groups with big pockets and unchecked influence. We haven't just showed up at the table and started making demand for change because we have been agents of change ever since when we first helped to establish the EEZ. Now the new-comers point their prissy fingers at us crying we are the culprits of the demise of the ocean. **UNDER FUNDING THROUGHOUT THE ERA OF THE MAGNUSON-STEVEN ACT FROM ALL LEVELS IS THE REAL VILIAN OF THE LOW KNOWLEDGE THRESHOLD OF OUR FISHERIES** and marine reserves is not a penance the enviros should be allowed to dole out to the fishing industry to pay for long-time budget constrains.

4. Past conflicts with ocean users and want-to-bes was best settled through dialogue and sometimes mitigation. Our own association went head to head with AT&T and came to a working agreement about the Bandon Cables. Today the state can be proud to have helped that mitigation process as Bandon Submarine Cable Council celebrates its thirteenth anniversary. Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee in Astoria is another example of successful partnerships created by fishermen with BIG corporations. The marine reserve issue was not approached the same way but if it were we would have had more willing fishermen stepping up as they did in Depoe Bay and Port Orford.

We acknowledge the fact that the train has left the station and perhaps we are not on board but we cannot join you for the ride because it is a train to nowhere. Marine reserves are not going to fix any problem and many of us refuse to sick our heads in the sand and pretend that everything is going to be okay. **If we do not fix the ODF&W budget they will never have enough money to do the scientific work that needs to be done.** If we don't fix their budget we will continue to apply band-aids instead of increasing our knowledge. Ignorance is not bliss!

I sincerely thank you,

Steve Bodnar, Executive Director