



ORCA: Oregon Coast Alliance
Protecting the Oregon Coast

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Feb. 27, 2017

Oregon Legislature
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Sen. Michael Dembrow, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 745, Ocean Beach Fund

Via email: senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Coast Alliance (ORCA) is an Oregon nonprofit whose mission is to protect coastal natural resources and aid in community livability. We write you today concerning SB 745.

ORCA **supports** SB 745, which establishes the Ocean Beach Fund.

Oregon has 362 miles of beaches, all of them public. The ocean beaches (managed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department as a State Recreation Area) and coastal State Parks are the backbone of the coastal economy; beach-visiting is the primary activity for coastal trips. More than three-quarters of Oregonians visit the coast at least once a year. In the last few years, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has seen large increases in coastal visitorship, which has strained the Department's already lean budget.

The basic problem is that OPRD does not have adequate resources to hire beach rangers and similar on-the-ground staff to manage the coastal parks so that visitors enjoy a quality experience. The solution envisaged by SB 745 is to take a small portion of the state transient lodging tax – the monies collected by OPRD for use of their own lodging facilities, including campgrounds – and return it to the Department as the Ocean Beach Fund. This is the 50th anniversary for the Beach Bill, a most appropriate time to reinvest in our beaches.

Though the amount of funding would probably not be large, if figures from the recent past are a true indicator, the several hundred thousand per year dedicated to beach management this bill would generate for OPRD would be very valuable to the agency.

The new Ocean Beach Fund would provide OPRD a small, but steady, source of income for beach management, so the agency has personnel to deal with on-the-ground issues like visitor safety, emergency response, vandalism, marine debris removal and user conflict. Furthermore, it would provide a margin of safety when unplanned beach-related expenses arise that were not budgeted for. These monies represent less than 1% of the total lodging tax revenue gathered statewide, all of which are currently given to the Tourism Commission/Travel Oregon.

ORCA recommends the Committee pass SB 745.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please place this testimony into the record for this measure.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cameron La Follette

Cameron La Follette