

March 23, 2017

To: Chair Clem and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
From: Dick Vander Schaaf, Associate Coast and Marine Conservation Director, Oregon Chapter, The Nature Conservancy
Re: Testimony in support of HB 3234 and HB 2784

Chair Clem and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 3234 and HB 2784.

In Oregon, the Conservancy has long been active in the conservation of estuarine environments and played a seminal role in the restoration of the native Olympia oyster in Netarts Bay. We were pleased to continue our shellfish protection efforts by participating in the Joint Interim Task Force on Oregon Shellfish that developed the recommendations reflected in HB 3234 and HB 2784.

Oregon shellfish are vital to Oregon's economy, ecology and community. As a valued commodity, shellfish contribute significantly to coastal economies through farmed oysters and recreationally harvested clams. Bivalve shellfish play an important role as primary filter feeders providing clean water and habitat structure. Finally, shellfish have an important role in the cultural history of Oregon for Native American tribes as well as coastal residents and visitors.

HB 3234 and HB 2784, together provide the necessary support for enhanced management of Oregon's bivalve shellfish resources through several coordinated actions. These actions include but are not limited to:

- Continuing to support the Molluscan Broodstock Program at OSU;
- Monitoring the effects of ocean acidification at the Whiskey Creek Shellfish Hatchery;
- Supporting outreach and enforcement programs and activities aimed at recreational clam harvesters;
- Conducting assessments of bay clam populations;
- Conserving and enhancing populations of Olympia oysters and other bivalve species that are declining or at risk of declining; and
- Making state agency management of commercial shellfish plats more efficient by consolidating responsibilities in the Department of Agriculture.

In addition to the provisions listed above, the bills contain several other Task Force recommendations supporting Oregon shellfish resources as both commodities to be thoughtfully utilized and natural resources to be conserved.

One recommendation of the Interim Task Force missing from these bills is the establishment of the Oregon Shellfish Initiative and Task Force. We hope the committee will consider adding that recommendation as the bills move forward.

In closing, we respectfully urge your support of House Bills 3234 and 2784 and look forward to working with you to advance the bills and maximize their positive impacts. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.