



ORCA: Oregon Coast Alliance
Protecting the Oregon Coast

P.O. Box 857, Astoria OR 97103
(503) 391-0210
www.oregoncoastalliance.org

May 2, 2017

Oregon Legislature
Oregon State Capitol
Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 745

Via email: lro.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Chair Hass 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, which has already been passed out of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

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 of the Beach Bill, a most appropriate time to reinvest in our beaches.

Though the amount of funding would probably not be large, the approximately three hundred thousand per year dedicated to beach management this bill would generate for OPRD (according to the April 2017 Legislative Fiscal Office review) 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 a very small portion of the total lodging tax revenue gathered statewide, all of which are currently given to the Tourism Commission/Travel Oregon. Given the high importance of the coastal state parks in drawing tourists to Oregon, it is appropriate to allow the money OPRD collects from its own lodgings on the ocean shore to return to the agency for management needs on the beaches.

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