

May 3, 2017

Oregon Legislature  
Oregon State Capitol  
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2695A

Via email: [sbt.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:sbt.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Dear Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Coast Alliance (ORCA), Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) and Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) write you today concerning HB 2695A, which exempts certain towing vessels and towed barges from requirements that an Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots licensee pilot the vessel in Coos Bay.

We **oppose HB 2695A**, which carves out a specific exemption to the bar pilots' requirement for the Coos estuary at the expense of estuarine ecology and public health and safety. Local knowledge of the waterway, the Coos estuary bar, the currents, tides and local weather patterns is crucial to safe pilotage in the Coos Bay area. Local knowledge of this kind has no substitute – neither in a general marine pilot's license, nor in technological information such as weather reports or radar.

The Oregon coast is notorious as the graveyard of the Pacific, with more than 3,000 wrecks in its history. Coos estuary has its share, with scores of ships lost in the bay itself or the entrance region of the bar throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many lives have been lost, and ships sunk to the bottom.

Coos estuary can no longer afford the threats to estuarine integrity posed by wrecked and damaged ships. These include contaminated bilge water, fuel spills and cargo loss. As bad as earlier wrecks have been, modern wrecks are far worse, as ship size has grown, with concomitant increase in fuel tank size, cargo load and use and/or shipping of hazardous materials.

There is no reason to carve out an exception to local bar pilotage for Coos estuary. The cost of such an exception are high: an invitation for shipwreck in the best coastal harbor in Oregon, a place of sensitive estuarine ecology rich in natural resources such as clams, oysters and fish.

Local knowledge is the key to safe pilotage over Coos Bay bar, as any other bar. We do not believe that this bill is in the public interest. It will likely lead to further efforts to carve out exceptions for other ports, which only multiplies the risks of danger, accident, loss of life and environmental damage.

Please oppose HB 2695A for the sake of Oregon's estuaries, rich marine life, and human life. It sounds trite to say, but in practice it is never trite to follow the maxim that safety comes first.

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

Sincerely,

Cameron La Follette  
Executive Director  
Oregon Coast Alliance

Lori Grant  
Water Program Director  
Oregon Environmental Council

Paige Spence  
Oregon Conservation Network Director  
Oregon League of Conservation Voters