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## Testimony in Support of SB 260

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Submitted by: Jena Carter, Oregon Coast and Marine Director, The Nature Conservancy

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 260, a bill that proposes to invest in ocean acidification and hypoxia.

The Nature Conservancy is a science-based and non-partisan conservation organization. Our mission is to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. The organization was incorporated in Oregon in 1961, and today we have over 70,000 supporters statewide with members in every county in Oregon. Our staff, based in communities across the state, work collaboratively with tribes, government agencies, elected officials, landowners, businesses, and stakeholders to develop solutions to the challenges facing people and nature.

Every year, our global oceans absorb roughly a quarter of the carbon dioxide released by human activities, causing the ocean's chemistry to change in a process known as ocean acidification. Ocean acidification is a slow, long-term process that results in the lowering of pH levels in seawater, creating a more acidic marine environment. Small changes in ocean chemistry can have serious impacts. Even the slightest shift in pH can inhibit shelled organisms from being able to form its shell. Marine calcifiers such as crabs, clams, oysters and some plankton cannot properly build their skeletons and shells in an acidic environment. While these species will be directly affected, others are affected indirectly because they eat shelled organisms or live in habitats they create (e.g. deep water corals and sponges). Because the marine food web is highly interconnected, ocean acidification threatens the well-being of many species and impacts to these species will likely ripple through the food web.

Concerned about the impacts on ocean acidification (OA) in Oregon, The Nature Conservancy worked with scientists, including Dr. Francis Chan and the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans, to build out a network of OA monitors in Oregon's marine reserves. Working together with the marine reserve community teams, OA monitors have now been placed in every marine reserve. The devices are cared for and monitored by volunteers of the community teams and the data is uploaded to a repository where Dr. Chan and other researchers can incorporate the information into their studies. This type of community-based,

collaborative research plays an important and complimentary role to the state and academia endeavors to understand the impacts of OA in Oregon's waters.

In 2017, Oregon Senate Bill 1039 was enacted and created the Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH Council) to provide recommendations and guidance for the State of Oregon on how to respond to this issue. In September 2018, the OAH Council released 38 recommendations for the State and is currently working on an Action Plan. SB 260 is the next step in supporting the work of the OAH Council and provides the funding necessary to begin implementation of the OAH Council recommendations and Action Plan.

As you review SB 260, we hope you consider the following:

1. While science is desperately needed to understand ocean acidification, TNC is concerned that a disproportionate amount of funds will be allocated towards studies and monitoring OA and not on action-oriented solutions that can help with adaptation to the changes that ocean acidification and hypoxia will bring. For this reason, we request that a minimum of 40% of the funds be dedicated to adaptation strategies.
2. Support the proposed SB260-1 Amendment to route the funds through the Oregon Ocean Science Trust (OOST). The Oregon Ocean Science Trust, established by the Legislature in 2013, provides a platform for peer-reviewed, collaborative, multi-institutional, and competitive research projects that enhance our scientific understanding of ocean and coastal resources. Moreover, the OOST has completed rulemaking to administer the competitive grant program proposed in this bill and would be an efficient mechanism for making funds available in a timely fashion. The OOST could conduct the grant program in consultation with the OAH Council and ensure that the process is transparent and results in publicly available and high-quality research findings.

In closing, The Nature Conservancy values and supports efforts by the state, academia and other partners to better understand, mitigate and adapt to the challenges of our changing oceans.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

For More Information Contact: **Jena Carter**, [jcarter@tnc.org](mailto:jcarter@tnc.org), 503-802-8114