

March 20, 2019

Testimony in Support of HB 2574

House Committee on Natural Resources

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

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2574.

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 has over 70,000 supporters statewide with members in every county in Oregon. Our staff collaboratively works with tribes, government agencies, landowners, businesses, and stakeholders to develop solutions to the challenges facing people and nature.

In 2015, the Legislature established the Joint Interim Task Force on Oregon Shellfish (Oregon Shellfish Task Force) to enhance shellfish production; conserve and restore wild populations of native shellfish; and improve water quality and health of aquatic and marine habitats. The Oregon Shellfish Task Force was composed of representatives from the shellfish industry, commercial and sport harvests, seafood safety, tribes, conservation and education. The Nature Conservancy is grateful for the opportunity to have served as one of the Task Force members.

The Oregon Shellfish Task Force held seven meetings from November 2015 to September 2016. The result of this effort was a framework and recommendations for an Oregon Shellfish Initiative.

In 2017, the Legislative Assembly advanced priorities contained within the initiative by establishing the Oregon Department of Agriculture as the lead agency for administration of oyster, clam, and mussel production, and creating a pilot project on water quality monitoring.

Today, HB 2574 represents the next phase of Task Force recommendations and implements key actions including community outreach, compilation of data and public records, and the administration of a commercial mariculture program on tidelands owned by counties and ports. The bill also contains provisions preventing the introduction or spread of invasive shellfish species and establishes a program for monitoring and analysis of water quality on certain tidelands.

Given the importance of shellfish to Oregon's economy and the ecological role that shellfish can play in estuaries, The Nature Conservancy supports the passage of HB 2574.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

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