



February 5, 2020

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE, S-407
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support Senate Bill 1554

Dear Senator Dembrow and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Surfrider Foundation appreciates the opportunity to provide the committee members with our comments and strong support for SB 1554, a bill to establish strategic investments within Oregon's Ocean Science Trust and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for critical issues facing our commercial fisheries, shellfish aquaculture and ocean and estuarine ecosystems. Oregon's Ocean Science Trust was established by the legislature in 2013 to enhance the state's capacity for peer-reviewed ocean and coastal research, yet the legislature has yet to invest in the fund. The trust was created at a time when there was a strong interest for supporting Oregon-based science to inform coastal and ocean management decisions critical to our coastal communities and fisheries. The goal was to build leveraged investments between public and private stakeholders while maintaining objectivity, and building trust in local science that drives collaboration between researchers and local communities in challenging ocean management decisions. As Oregon's ocean has become the epicenter for the impacts of ocean acidification and hypoxia among a myriad of other stressors that are putting our coastal economy at risk, the time is well overdue for Oregon to make these modest investments in the Ocean Science Trust.

As early as 2007, the Whiskey Creek Hatchery, an oyster hatchery in Netarts, OR became the canary in the coalmine for ocean acidification when they were [unable to rear young oyster larvae](#) due to the changing ocean water chemistry. A seemingly small business, Whiskey Creek is a critical link in the nearly \$300 million Pacific shellfish industry, supplying approximately 70 percent of oyster larvae to farmers from Canada to South America. By 2013, researchers had learned that many of the animals at the base of our ocean food chains were being increasingly impacted - animals with crucial connections to recreational and commercially important fish species such as salmon, tuna and whiting. And early this year, a new study from NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory found that [ocean acidification is dissolving crab shells](#) and damaging sensory organs in young Dungeness crabs off our coast. These impacts, much earlier than ever anticipated, represent a serious concern for Oregon's largest seafood commodity that contributes \$100s of millions to Oregon's economy.

With Oregon being the epicenter of ocean acidification and hypoxia, impacted stakeholders such as fishermen, shellfish hatcheries and recreational users alike were the first to begin partnering with researchers on monitoring efforts along the coast. In the absence of dedicated funding from the state for monitoring, researchers sought these types of local partnerships to enhance what little monitoring was currently underway as well as to support our improved understanding to adapt. While these community volunteer and fishermen partnerships can help support small academic monitoring projects and some outreach and education, more robust strategic investments from the state are needed to support the actual management of our marine ecosystems and the fisheries dependent upon them. As such, Oregon established the Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Council (SB 1039) to develop a report identifying actions for immediate attention, presumably to be acted upon during the 2019 legislative session. From the report, 7 actions across 5 themes were identified, which are further reflected in the appropriations for strategic investments in this bill ([OAH Action Plan](#)).

Today, our oceans are under increased pressures from ocean acidification and hypoxia (OAH), warming waters and a variety of “perfect storm” events like El Nino. Surfrider Foundation, is a grassroots network of ocean advocates dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world’s oceans, waves and beaches, but moreover we are people of the ocean and coast. Our Oregon chapter network and volunteers are deeply rooted in the health of our ocean and coastal economy, many of which depend on these resources for our livelihoods. As such, we both witness and feel the impacts of ocean acidification and hypoxia directly. Investments are critically needed to learn and adapt to these changing ocean conditions which put management of our fisheries, ocean ecosystems, coastal economies and even just a nice day at the beach at risk. Funding of the Ocean Science Trust has lacked for 7 years now and both the OAH Action Plan's recommendations and the Marine Reserves evaluation are highly necessary and actionable areas for industry and conservation investments in the Trust. The Trust was formed to support strong peer-reviewed, objective, third-party science of Ocean resources issues and we can think of no greater time than now to act and align in bipartisan fashion on these important issues

We strongly urge your yes vote on SB 1554.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Plybon". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Charlie Plybon
Oregon Policy Manager, Surfrider Foundation
11770 SE Acacia St.
South Beach, OR 97366