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Testimony on SB1554: Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Oregon Ocean Science Fund, State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Higher Education Coordinating Commission and Oregon Department of Administrative Services for certain ocean program purposes

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Submitted by: Shelby Walker, Director – Oregon Sea Grant, Chair – Science and Technical Advisory Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelby E. Walker".

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1544, a bill appropriating funds to several entities to support ocean program purposes. This testimony is provided on behalf of the **Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)**, a committee under the Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC). The STAC provides scientific and technical guidance to OPAC and state agencies related to Oregon's ocean or nearshore resources.

Per SB 1510 (2012), the STAC is required to submit a report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly in March 2023 regarding marine reserves implementation in Oregon. The report is to be prepared by an Oregon university; however, no funding was allocated for this process. There is an urgent need to provide the necessary funds in order to meet the Legislature's 2023 deadline and to ensure sufficient lead time for STAC to identify the fiscal agent, issue the request for proposal, select the university to prepare the assessment, allow time for the university to conduct its work, and prepare the final report for the Legislature.

The STAC projects that approximately **\$250,000** is required to complete this assessment. STAC members unanimously agree that if no funding is provided, it is extremely unlikely that any principal investigators (PIs) will respond to a request for proposals (RFP). In the unlikely event that a team of PIs did respond to an RFP with no available funds, STAC has serious concerns that the resulting report would be agenda-driven (biased towards a pre-determined position regarding marine reserves) and/or insufficient quality to ensure viability of any recommendations. STAC unanimously agrees that sufficient funding is imperative to maximize the likelihood of obtaining a high-quality, unbiased report.

The STAC is hopeful that funding can be provided during the 2020 short session to ensure STAC is able to fulfill its obligations per SB 1510 (2010) and provide the report to the Oregon Legislature to assist in its review of the Oregon's marine reserves program.

Thank you for your support of sound science for Oregon's coastal and marine systems.