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Testimony in favor on HB 1554

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Submitted by Amelia Porterfield, Senior Policy Advisor

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1554, which invests in Oregon's ocean health, education, and knowledge of acidification and hypoxia.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a science-based and non-partisan conservation organization dedicated to protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC was incorporated in Oregon in 1961, and today has over 80,000 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, private landowners, businesses, and natural resource stakeholders to develop solutions to the major challenges facing people and nature.

SB 1554 provides a crucial investment in Oregon's ocean and supports years of effort by the many people who have worked together to identify and present solutions on some of the most pressing issues to Oregon's marine ecosystems. This bill would fund significant progress on the recommendations of the Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia, the Oregon Shellfish Task Force, the Oregon Ocean Science Trust, and the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) of the Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC).

The research and on-the-ground projects in this bill are important and each has merit. One project we want to particularly draw to your attention is the urgent need to provide \$250,000 for the STAC to contract with an Oregon university to evaluate the marine reserves program and submit a report to the legislature in March 2023, as called for in SB 1510 (2012). Currently, no funds are allocated for this work. An immediate investment is needed to allow STAC enough time to issue the request for proposal, select the university to prepare the assessment, allow the university to conduct its work, and prepare the final report for the Legislature's review.

We thank Senator Roblan for bringing this bill forward, and for his unfailing passion for Oregon's oceans over the years. We are glad to support this legislation this year and will greatly miss his leadership in the future!

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.