

**CENTRAL POINT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
450 S. 4TH STREET
CENTRAL POINT, OR 97502**

Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

March 27, 2021

Dear Senator Kathleen Taylor, Representative Jeff Reardon and members of the Committee,

The South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve is located in the Coos estuary where it provides valuable public recreation and learning opportunities for Oregon residents and visitors, as well as conducts important monitoring and research to better understand and manage coastal watersheds and estuaries.

We are pleased to support Senate Bill 5539 because it provides necessary operational funding for the Department of State Lands, including the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve.

As a public school, we rely on the South Slough Estuary for a significant part of our Outdoor Education program. Each June, after studying forest and wetlands ecology at great length, our fifth graders spend a day in the Estuary applying what they've learned in class. We have been coupling this with marine biology studies in and around Charleston for more than a decade. Other schools in our district do so as well. This outdoor education experience is significant for the kids and the driving force behind meeting science and writing standards.

We feel fortunate the Legislature has prioritized Outdoor Education, but such funding will be in vain for many southern Oregon schools without access to the Slough and its programs. Consequently, we strongly encourage the Committee to pass SB 5536 to continue support of the South Slough Reserve and its important work.

Sincerely,



Mack Lewis, teacher/outdoor ed coordinator
Central Point Elementary