



February 9, 2023

Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon Legislature

Re: Environment Oregon supports House Bill 2903

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Environment Oregon is a statewide, member-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water and open space. We support House Bill 2903 because Oregon's Marine Reserve Program (the Program) has proven successful and fulfilled the original goals they were set to meet. They have conserved the marine habitats and biodiversity of Oregon's state waters while serving as effective scientific research sites that have engaged the local community. We believe this program is worthy of further investment.

Since 2009, five marine reserves and nine marine protected areas have been established in Oregon's waters. In total, this represents 9% of Oregon's nearshore waters and encompasses a wide range of amazing habitats. Within the five reserves alone, craggy reefs serve as excellent habitat for a variety of rockfish species, vast sandy bottoms support large populations of sand dollars and Dungeness crab, and towering kelp forests give abalone, crab and other creatures a place to call home. These habitats have also given scientists the opportunity to monitor changes to these ecosystems over time.

In the past 10 years alone, scientists have published 18 research publications and 85 reports on topics like hypoxia, ocean acidification, changing ocean environments, and ocean acidification. The Program has also allowed scientists to test out new scientific methods for nearshore monitoring at a number of reserves, hosted over 75 community engagement events, and worked with over 10,000 volunteers from the local community. It's clear that Oregonians care about this Program and protecting these amazing ocean ecosystems.

Please pass House Bill 2903 so we can build on the success of the Program and continue to protect, monitor, and appreciate these amazing nearshore ecosystems in which seals, crab, anemones, rockfish, and a vast array of other marine plants and animals can flourish.

Sincerely,

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director