

February 4, 2023

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

Re: Support for HB 2903

Dear Chairman Helm and Members of the Committee:

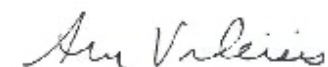
I am writing to urge the Committee to advance HB 2903 in order to continue supporting Oregon's Marine Reserves Program into the future. I am a long-term resident of Port Orford, which is the gateway community for the Red Fish Rocks Marine Reserve. I am a Port Orford City Council member, and I am also president of the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, a Curry County-based group with more than 400 members who support conservation of habitat for birds, fish, and wildlife. Because of my long-term community involvement, I can attest that our reserve has enjoyed local support and has benefited our community and our local marine environment.

In its first ten years, our state's marine reserve program has been a success. Because reserves provide a critical natural laboratory, they have enabled us to better understand the challenges Oregon's nearshore waters now face—with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as fishermen, academics, and coastal communities all partnering together to expand understanding of our marine environment. Research conducted through the reserve program, for example, has increased knowledge of ocean acidification and has also contributed useful information to manage our fisheries.

The reserves have also provided a valuable opportunity for the public—both residents and visitors—to learn about the marine life and pressing issues in our local area. For example, our local Redfish Rocks Community Team has hosted excellent educational events and provided innovative ways for visitors to learn about our marine environment, not only about the biodiversity of fish in the reserves but also about the positive engagement of our fishermen. The reserves have also created interest and opportunities for citizens to actively engage in beneficial community science programs, such as monitoring for seastar wasting disease and for shorebirds adjacent to the Redfish Rocks Marine Reserves.

At this juncture, it's important to keep supporting our state's Marine Reserve Program. HB 2903 is based on and supports the recommendations of the OSU Marine Reserve Assessment Report. Moving forward with these recommendations will help assure that Oregon will have healthy, resilient, and productive coastal marine environments into the future. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,



Ann Vileisis