

Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc.

P. O. Box 5446, Charleston, Oregon 97420



6 March 2023

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

Dear Senator Michael Dembrow, Representative Khanh Pham and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Directors of Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc. (FOSS) provide enthusiastic support for the essential funding of operating South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve within the overall agency budget of Oregon Department of State Lands (House Bill 5037).

FOSS supports South Slough Reserve's mission to protect and restore the natural areas along the Coos estuary for their ecological function. We are working to highlight the importance of this Reserve as it approached its 50th anniversary as the first designated in the Nation. The estuary watershed and habitat are essential to our fish and wildlife populations and provide a key role in improving water quality for the Coos Bay estuary, and key linkages to marine and nearshore systems. The Reserve supports recreation of all kinds, tourism, fishing and hunting, in addition to its research, stewardship and educational programs.

HB 5037 includes a policy option package for two items totaling \$163,728 that will enhance safe access and provide additional scientific and management support for the Reserve.

- 1) The *Seasonal Park Ranger* position will assist in maintaining the reserve's trails, waterways, and facilities during the busiest visitor seasons. This position is critical for providing safe access for staff and recreational opportunities for the 10,000 visitors who visit the reserve annually.
- 2) Increased funding for the existing *half-time GIS Specialist* position will allow for full-time critical analysis and map products. This will support research, education, and stewardship of the Reserve.

Thank you for your continued support of South Slough Reserve, its important work and contributions to the community and region.

Sincerely,

Christine Moffitt, President

Jeanne Standley, Secretary

The Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation comprised of people interested in protecting the functions, values and processes of estuaries, and enhancing the work of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR).

www.fossnerr.org