



February 6, 2024

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Legislature

(Formerly Portland
Audubon)

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4132, which will help move forward recommendations of the Oregon State University Marine Reserve Assessment Report as well as by the Ocean Policy Advisory Council to build on the Oregon's marine reserves and marine protected area program. This legislation will ensure the program takes the right steps to incorporate an adaptive management process and resiliency measures much needed in the face of the increasing impact of climate change and other stressors in our nearshore waters. Over 10 years ago Oregon made a commitment to move forward with this innovative program. Now it's time to strengthen it. Passage of this bill will be a big step to ensure Oregon's nearshore waters will be productive for generations to come.

Oregon's marine reserve and protected area program has been a big success. The "natural laboratory" that these sites create have enabled cutting edge research examining some of the most important and pressing challenges facing Oregon's marine environment. For example, collaboration between OSU scientists, ODFW, and local community members (community scientists) have helped assess the impact of increasing ocean acidification on the marine ecosystem. The data collected in marine reserves has also helped provide more detailed information on fisheries stock assessments that ultimately help improve fishing opportunities. In addition to vital research, marine reserves have bolstered coastal economies supporting over \$750,000 in contracts to local fishers and charters to support collaborative research. However, this work has been done on a shoestring budget and has dealt with budget cuts through the years. We need to make the program stronger. Supporting HB 4132 will:

- Reinstate the Community Engagement position that is a vital liaison to coastal communities
- Increase ability to understand long-term ecological changes in our marine environment including climate change impacts
- Greater opportunities for collaboration with the fishing community to better understand and manage our economically important fisheries
- Establish clear goals and metrics to ensure outreach and engagement with key stakeholders including federally recognized tribes

We urge you to move HB 4132 forward and support it throughout the legislative session. For a relatively small price tag, we can help Oregon's ocean make big gains in knowledge and sustainability.

Sincerely,

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