

2/28/2025

Dear Co-chair Helm, Co-chair Owens and members of the committee,

I write today to ask you to support Oregon's rocky coastal habitats and eelgrass meadows. Specifically, **I ask for your enthusiastic support on HB 3580 and HB 3587.**

These bills are an opportunity to support biodiversity, coastal economies, and Oregon's resilience in the face of a changing climate.

I live on the North Coast. I don't live here by chance; I am of the coastal margin. Proximity to the ocean is a backbone of my quality of life. **The ability of coastal communities—my community—to weather economic and climate shifts is literally my life, and my neighbors' lives, and our mutual prosperity.**

I care deeply about the human and non-human inhabitants of our coastal landscapes. I think you do too. I hope you'll see that **HB 3580 and HB 3587 give our state a chance to make that care tangible.**

Just a few specific reasons we should protect and conserve eelgrass meadows and rocky habitats:

- Eelgrass meadows shelter juvenile fish. They directly sustain our fisheries.
- Eelgrass meadows cushion the impact of storm surges on human coastal communities.
- Eelgrass meadows sequester carbon at astonishing rates. They're part of a natural solution to increasing atmospheric CO2.
- Rocky habitats are iconic Oregon. Their beauty, and the wonder they inspire, brings the tourists, who directly support coastal communities' livelihoods.
- Rocky habitats also directly support the fish species that sustain our fisheries.

So maybe you're asking yourself what the *problem* is. Why do we need to spend money on these habitats; aren't they just...there?

No: in fact, eelgrass is disappearing around the world, and we're seeing signs of that on Oregon's south coast, too. No: because of threats from increasing pollution and warming seas, **these habitats won't continue to thrive without human help.**

That's why I need you to support these two bills. The sums of money we're asking you to allocate are modest. **Please prioritize the thriving of coastal people, coastal habitats, and coastal economies—all three of which are unseparably intertwined.**

Thank you for your time and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

*Tara Shepersky*

Nehalem