

Submitter: Sara Simon-Behrnes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3580

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to respectfully ask for your support of HB 3580 and HB 3587, two important bills that will help protect Oregon's invaluable rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows. These bills present a crucial opportunity to safeguard biodiversity, support coastal economies, and strengthen resilience to a changing climate.

Oregon's underwater eelgrass meadows are biodiversity hotspots, carbon sinks, and essential nursery habitats for many juvenile fish species. Their health is critical for sustaining fisheries, maintaining water quality, and buffering against climate impacts—yet these vital ecosystems are showing signs of decline. HB 3580 takes a proactive approach by establishing a Task Force to set conservation targets through a collaborative effort with agencies, Tribes, scientists, local communities, and other stakeholders. This is a necessary first step in ensuring we don't lose these habitats before it's too late.

Similarly, Oregon's rocky habitats—from Haystack Rock to Coquille Point—are not only iconic tourist destinations but also home to millions of nesting birds, marine mammals, fish, and invertebrates. However, increasing climate pressures and human disturbance are putting these fragile ecosystems at risk. HB 3587 would improve agency coordination to better protect these sites and create a grant fund to support local efforts in educating the public on how to enjoy these areas while minimizing harm to wildlife and habitats.

Now is the time to invest in the future of our coastal ecosystems. With a modest investment, we can ensure that eelgrass meadows and rocky habitats remain thriving, protected, and accessible for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sara