

Submitter: Megan Dussault

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 am writing to ask that you please support HB 3580 and HB 3587, and our invaluable rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows. These bills offer an important opportunity to support biodiversity, coastal economies, and increase resilience to a changing climate.

Oregon's underwater eelgrass meadows are biodiversity hotspots, carbon sinks, and nursery habitat to many juvenile fish species. Their health is vital for sustaining our fisheries, maintaining water quality, and buffering against climate impacts. However, there are signs these essential habitats are in decline in Oregon. HB 3580 would set up a Taskforce to set conservation targets through a collaborative effort involving agencies, Tribes, scientists, local communities, and others. This bill is the first essential step to proactively prevent habitat loss before it's too late.

Oregon's rocky habitats, like Haystack Rock and Coquille Point, are iconic tourist destinations for millions of visitors. They are also incredibly important for millions of nesting birds, marine mammals, fish and invertebrates. Increasing climate impacts and human disturbance are threatening these special places. HB 3587 would provide needed agency coordination to better protect these sites. It also would set up a grant fund for local communities to engage the public on best practices to enjoy these places while minimizing disturbance to sensitive wildlife and habitats.

Personally, I find great joy in spending time along our coastlines to observe the unique flora and fauna of Oregon. I love birdwatching and feel joyful to see diverse bird species flourish along our coastlines. However, I have also seen many dead shorebirds on our beaches, and am aware that many shorebird species are declining or imperiled, such as Marbled Murrelet, Western Snowy Plover, and Tufted Puffin. The protection of rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows is therefore crucial to the continued survival of these species, as well as the enjoyment of the public for generations to come.

Wildlife conservation depends on the conservation of critical habitat, which in turn bolsters local economies and people as well, in more ways than purely economical. Now is the time to act to protect our coastal ecosystems before it is too late. For a modest investment we can ensure both eelgrass meadows and rocky habitats can be conserved for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Megan Dussault