

Submitter: Elizabeth Draper

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 request your support of HB 3580 and HB 3587, they are an asset to our rocky habitats and eelgrass meadows. These bills offer a great opportunity to support biodiversity, coastal economies, and increase resilience to a changing climate.

Did you know that an acre of eelgrass can sequester 740 pounds of carbon a year? That's FOUR times higher than terrestrial forests! 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.

As a native Oregonian, I was impressed to hear how comprehensive the Taskforce of HB 3580 would be. It would 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 magnets for tourists along the coast. 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.

As a retired teacher, I have had more time in my schedule to volunteer through North Coast Conservancy and learn about the essential habitats that these two ecosystems provide for ocean life.

Please take action now to protect our coastal ecosystems for future generations.

Thank you!

Elizabeth Draper