

Submitter: Clark Kocurek
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2969

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2969.

Seafood is caught, processed, and sold by the ton in my local community of Port Orford. Our local Port and the family-owned fishing boats that dock there are central to the town's economy and identity.

Oregon fisheries workers already take great care to reduce waste and harvest sustainably. Yet for many small fishermen, operating costs are rising faster than seafood prices and an opportunity to improve ex-vessel value is needed. Conveniently, there is an opportunity plain as day - the fishery waste stream. Even a high-yielding table fish, cut by an expert, will be 30%+ waste by mass. That 30%+ is valuable, if the coastal economy is empowered to process it into marketable products. Omega 3 dietary supplements, pet food, fish-based skin grafts, fertilizer, soil amendments, and fish leather are just a few potential opportunities that come to mind.

Any opportunity to "catch" more of the economic and environmental value of Oregon's fisheries at the coast would be money well spent. With low-cost inputs (fisheries waste) available by the ton up and down Oregon's coast, and accessible using existing infrastructure (US 101, refrigerator trucks), businesses seeking to make bulk commodities or high-value-add products from the "whole fish" on the Oregon coast could realistically be quite profitable.

If businesses began operations and recruited workers from the local towns along the coast, the benefits would be substantial. The coast is badly in need of steady, living-wage jobs: full time employment for families or at least good seasonal work during the tourism off-season. This could improve wages, support local tax bases, and quality of life for Oregon's beloved coastal towns and counties. That is a lot of potential benefit relative to the proposed appropriation.

This is an opportunity to make an important investment in coastal Oregon's future. Thank you for your consideration of my support for HB 2969.