



To: Co-Chairs Senator Kate Lieber and Representative Tawna Sanchez and members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee
CC: and Co- Chairs Senator Neron Misslin and Representative Emerson Levy, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources.

From: The Oregon Ocean Alliance

Date: January 30, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez and members of the committee,

The Oregon Ocean Alliance is a group of eight member organizations that work collectively to advance the protection of Oregon's ocean and coastal ecosystems. Our geographic scope includes federal and state ocean waters, and coastal habitats such as estuaries and beaches.

We are writing today to highlight the importance of protecting, restoring, and investing in our ocean and coastal habitats, which contribute significantly to Oregon's economies. Investments in these resilient habitats means investing in coastal protection from extreme weather events, improving water quality for coastal communities, and protecting habitat for many marine species, which in turn supports fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and recreational opportunities.

Effective management and protection of these critical habitats takes adequate funding and staff capacity. The agencies doing this important work make up a small fraction of the state budget, yet their collective work has significant impacts for Oregon's communities, climate, and economy. The Oregon Ocean Alliance urges protecting critical state agency programs, positions, and investments that manage, protect, and restore ocean and coastal resources.

Below we provide recommendations on specific marine/coastal programs within natural resource agencies:

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Oregon Marine Reserves Program

The Oregon Ocean Alliance is deeply concerned about the proposed 2.5% (\$155,980) and 5% (\$105,921) (**Total: \$261,901**) cuts to Oregon's Marine Reserves Program long-term monitoring. Reduction of this amount will eliminate critical ecological, biological, and environmental

monitoring for the biennium, which is inconsistent with the statutory mandate for ecological monitoring of Marine Reserves under HB 4132 (2024 session). Over the last 15 years, the program has been spending approximately \$250K/biennium on supplies and services for ecological monitoring (see pg. 76 of the [ODFW Marine Reserves decadal report](#)).

During most biennia, between 50% and 60% of the supplies and services budget is spent on boat charter contracts with local commercial fishermen. Under the proposed cut scenario, these contracts will be severely reduced and the program will be unable to fulfill its goals. This conflicts with mandates in HB 4132 and will make the program non-functional as it depends on annual monitoring data to develop adaptive management recommendations, and may necessitate a statutory change given the agency would be unable to fulfill the required monitoring plan activities for 2026.

Other key reasons to avoid reductions to the Marine Reserve Program:

- Maintaining the marine reserves program supports Governor Kotek's Executive Order 25-26 on climate resilience, which explicitly calls for state agencies, including ODFW, to "...support long-term resilience of nearshore resources".
- Coastal and marine ecosystems are the most powerful per-acre carbon sinks on earth, and can sequester up to 10-15 times more carbon than terrestrial ecosystems.
- Ocean-dependent sectors of our economy provide over \$3.4B in GDP to our state per year, primarily from renewable resource uses, and have demonstrated tangible economic benefits to communities such as jobs and income (e.g., [Port Orford](#)).
- For a modest investment, the entire marine reserves program has consistently cost the state less than \$2M / per biennium over the last 15 years since its inception in 2009. This investment has allowed Oregon to adapt to climate impacts like ocean acidification, ocean-warming and hypoxia (or low oxygen) events, vanishing kelp habitats and adverse effects to species that provide food and livelihoods for Oregonians.

We strongly recommend no cuts to the marine reserves program.

We are also concerned about the proposed **\$250K cut to the Marine OAH program** and **\$3.2 million reduction to the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division ODFW**, both of which directly support the management of Marine Reserves and other critical habitat along the Oregon coastline.

Department of Land Conservation and Development

Coastal Shoreline Stabilization Rulemaking

The Oregon Ocean Alliance has concerns about the proposed \$268,488 cut to the Coastal Shoreline Stabilization Rulemaking. Based on our current understanding, a statutory change that extended the timeline for future funding would be acceptable, but eliminating the statutory direction for rulemaking altogether is of great concern and should be avoided.

Department of State Lands

The Oregon Ocean Alliance is concerned about the deep proposed cut (\$2,246,878) to the **Abandoned and Derelict Vessels program**. There needs to be continued work to remove these pollution-producing and dangerous vessels from our nearshore environment.

Department of Environmental Quality

The Oregon Ocean Alliance finds the cuts to cease **Harmful Algal Bloom monitoring and Advisories** in recreational waters deeply concerning as it puts many human lives at risk and eliminates currently filled positions.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

The **reduction in capital improvement (\$2.2M)** would severely impact park properties already facing a significant backlog of maintenance and repair needs. It is unclear whether many of the facilities and historical properties would need to be closed to the public entirely under the impacts of this reduction.

Thanks for considering these budget cut concerns regarding Oregon's vital coastal and marine habitats.

Sincerely,

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