



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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(South Coast Charter, Sport or
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November 13, 2023

Governor Tina Kotek
160 State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support Necessary Funding for Ocean and Coastal Programs and Marine Reserves

Dear Governor Kotek,

The Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) works diligently to provide advice to your office, state agencies and local governments regarding the management and policies that guide the protection and uses of Oregon's Territorial Sea, including the establishment of marine reserves. Reaching consensus can be challenging when there is a broad and diverse set of interested parties and affected users. Yet, one area where OPAC unanimously agreed was on the value of science and outreach conducted through the marine reserves program.

In September 2022, OPAC received a presentation on the 10-year assessment on the progress and work of the marine reserves program. At that time, OPAC wrote a letter to then-Gov. Kate Brown recommending the marine reserve program be fully funded and that the recommendations from the 10-year assessment be implemented. This support was reinforced during several OPAC meetings over the past year. Given the strong support from your ocean advisory body and a diverse group of interested and affected parties, we were disappointed to learn that funding for program staff and support of the existing marine reserves program including implementation of the recommendations from the 10-year assessment were not included in the state budget for the next biennium.

Properly funding the staff and resources necessary to implement policies that OPAC and their workgroups have volunteered countless hours developing is especially poignant at this juncture. In December 2022, OPAC approved the final package to designate special nearshore areas as part of the Oregon Territorial Sea Plan Part Three: Rocky Habitat Management Strategy. And at our September 8, 2023, meeting, OPAC recommended amendments to TSP Part Four: Uses of the Seafloor as mandated by the Legislature in House Bill 2603 (2021) which are scheduled to be adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission at their November meeting. Absent funding for our state agencies to initiate rulemaking and implement these policies and programs, OPAC's work has been for naught.

OPAC would also like to highlight the concerns and perspectives of tribal nations. The process to design, refine, and establish marine reserves involved an intensive public process, years of meetings, and dedication by state agencies to provide the support necessary to protect and monitor these unique ocean areas. However, traditional and subsistence tribal harvest was not recognized in the establishment of marine reserves. It is unclear the extent to which meaningful consultation with tribes occurred, effectively restricting tribal use in these areas in perpetuity despite new co-management agreements.



The coastal tribal sovereigns in Oregon have been the stewards of these places since time immemorial; their knowledge, expertise, connection, rights, and roles in stewardship recognized in recent co-management agreements between the tribes and the state. The need to improve outreach to tribes was specifically highlighted in the marine reserves 10-year assessment report. We urge the administration and state agencies to consult with tribal governments early and often when developing ocean policies for the state and to reconsult with tribal nations on the designation of marine reserves as it relates to tribal interests.

Members of the public, agency staff, tribal members, and OPAC representatives have spent countless hours discussing, advising on, and refining the policies and processes that guide uses of Oregon's Territorial Sea. We reiterate the importance of fully funding Oregon's marine reserve program -- and the upcoming implementation of TSP Part Three: Rocky Habitat Management Strategy and TSP Part Four: Uses of the Seafloor.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations. We remain committed to this work to ensure the state retains the uniqueness of our ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of all Oregonians and look forward to hearing from your office soon.

Sincerely,



Chair Susan Chambers

The Ocean Policy Advisory Council



Vice-Chair Tara Brock