

Legislature Makes Significant Investment in Ocean Science

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Nearly \$1 million in state funding is starting to make its way to ocean researchers to help Oregon better understand and monitor and ocean changes. In the 2021 legislative session, Oregon lawmakers passed HB3114, which allocated the funds to the Oregon Ocean Science Trust (OOST) for the purpose of addressing ocean acidification and hypoxia (OAH) and the risks it poses to the state's economy and ecosystems. Through competitive grants, the funds are now being distributed to marine researchers.

Ocean acidification first made its presence known in 2007, when oyster growers were unable to grow young oysters. When carbon dioxide from our atmosphere enters the ocean, it chemically reacts with water. The sea becomes acidified. Hypoxia is low, or depleted, oxygen in ocean water; hypoxia is exacerbated by acidification. These changes can have unhealthy effects on marine life and coastal economies.

"We are thankful to Oregon lawmakers for seeing the value of investing in increasing our ocean knowledge at this important time," said Laura Anderson, Chair of the Oregon Ocean Science Trust. "Coastal economies and Oregon fisheries are directly dependent on healthy marine ecosystems. And helping policy makers proactively manage ocean resources and is ultimately a benefit for all Oregonians."

The funding addressed [priority actions in Oregon's OAH Plan](#) and supports OAH monitoring in Oregon's coastal waters and in Yaquina Bay.

"Oregon's OAH Action Plan was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders," said Caren Braby, OAH Council Co-Chair. "It identifies research priorities and ultimately will help Oregon better adapt to and mitigate the problems we are already seeing and are expecting to worsen in decades to come."

OAH Council Co-Chair Jack Barth added, "The results of increasing ocean acidification and hypoxia have had far-reaching consequences, for both Oregon's ocean ecosystem and the economy, consequences that we, as a society, are only just beginning to understand and quantify."

To date, funding through competitive grants is awarded to:

Dr. Francis Chan, Oregon State University: \$385,088 to enhance subtidal and intertidal OAH monitoring at Oregon's Marine Reserves. Funding will guide future state investments that protect ecologically important places in Oregon's Territorial Sea.

Dr. Robert Cowen, Oregon State University Hatfield Marine Science Center: \$97,497 to establish a long-term OAH monitoring station in Yaquina Bay, including data collection and dissemination system. Funding will help Oregonians understand impacts of ocean change in an important economic, research, and management hub for Oregon.

Dr. George Waldbusser, Oregon State University: \$174,989 to map the dynamics of OAH in the Yaquina Bay estuary and the related biological responses in native Olympia oysters. Funding will expand our scientific knowledge on an ecologically and culturally significant species that is potentially vulnerable to ocean change.

[The OOST will announce additional competitive grant opportunities](#) and awards for applied OAH research, management, and communications. The announcement is expected in mid-February.

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