

Second Round of Investments in Ocean Science by Oregon Legislature Focuses on Nearshore Science and Monitoring

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Oregon Ocean Science Trust (OOST) is announcing a new competitive grant opportunity totaling \$900,000 for the purpose of science and monitoring on nearshore keystone species, including sea otters, nearshore marine ecosystems, kelp and eelgrass habitat, and sequestration of blue carbon. The funding was made available through the 2022 Oregon Legislature as part of House Bill 5202. This comes just as the OOST completed disbursing a 2021 legislative fund totaling just over \$1 million for research on ocean acidification and monitoring.

“This is a good example of the type of funding we need more of to allow our communities to thrive,” said Senator Dick Anderson. “There are unique challenges that face our nearshore species and habitats. And the connection between these ecosystems and the broader environment is an often neglected area of research. I am encouraged by this development and am proud to advocate for it.”

Oregon’s coastal communities and economies depend on healthy nearshore marine ecosystems. Nearshore species and habitats are at risk of experiencing negative impacts from both human population increase and climate change stressors. By better understanding Oregon’s ocean today, we greatly improve planning and future actions to conserve or restore the ecological functions of these important ecosystems.

“Good data is fundamental to good decision-making,” said State Representative David Gomberg. “As a legislator, it’s important to me that I understand how the choices we make today will impact our ecosystems tomorrow. But that can’t happen without data. Our ocean shore is a national treasure – but the very real consequences of human activity have strained coastal ecosystems. I am hopeful that these investments in research will help us better understand how we can more effectively utilize our coastal resources while practicing responsible stewardship of the natural capital that has always made our coast so special.”

A majority of the funding will be for field data collection projects to increase knowledge of the distribution, abundance, and status of nearshore species and to help to complete the state’s inventory and mapping of kelp and seagrasses (“submerged aquatic vegetation” or SAV, in both marine and estuarine areas). The remainder of the funding will be for modeling to inform understanding of Oregon’s nearshore or estuarine ecosystems and how future changes in ocean

conditions may affect the nearshore. These information products will be available for the public to access.

“These nearshore projects are intended to fill gaps in our understanding of nearshore species and habitats and their interactions.” said Caren Braby, Co-Chair of Oregon’s Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Council. “Results from these projects will directly inform our management of nearshore and estuary systems and decision-making.”

“We remain appreciative to Oregon lawmakers for their continued leadership and support in making investments in Oregon’s ocean and coastal resources,” said Laura Anderson, Chair of the Oregon Ocean Science Trust. “Ocean health affects all coastal communities, Oregon’s economy, and our quality of life.”

The OOST will begin accepting grant applications on October 1, 2022; the deadline to submit a grant proposal is December 1, 2022. The OOST intends to award grants in January 2023. Project recipients are expected to complete their projects and final reports by March 2025. All information pertaining to the competitive grant process can be viewed at <https://www.oregonoceanscience.com/>.

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