



PRESS RELEASE

REP. DAVID GOMBERG
STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 10

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New Oregon Coast and Gray Whale License Plate Proposed



Whale lovers can support Marine Mammal Institute with new license plate

A new “Coastal Playground” license plate featuring a gray whale and her calf likely could be available to Oregon drivers as soon as summer 2017.

As Whale Watch Week unfolds along the coast, volunteers are circulating “Interest Forms” which allow vehicle owners to commit to a future plate purchase. The new specialty plate will cost an additional \$40 for two years. The forms can also be found online at <http://mmi.oregonstate.edu/whaleplate>. Once 3,000 commitments are received, organizers will move forward with plate approval and production.

The project is sponsored by the Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute and State Representative David Gomberg. Enthusiasm is running high, said Bruce Mate, director of the institute.

“Everybody I’ve shown the plate design to has loved it,” said Mate, whose institute will receive \$35 from the Oregon Department for each plate sold. The money will go toward whale research, graduate student education and public outreach.

The license plate depicts the cow-calf pair on a two-tone blue background that emulates sea and sky. In the upper left corner is a lighthouse, and across the bottom reads “Coastal Playground.”

“I call it a coastal plate because it promotes the coast,” Gomberg said. “But I think it has much broader appeal. Whale watching is an iconic part of the coastal experience for all Oregonians and a remarkable success story.”

“Gray whales were on the Endangered Species List because of exploitation, and now they’re the only whale species to recover and be removed from the list.” said Mate. “They’re Oregon’s flagship large whale. Ninety-five percent of the whales you see from shore are gray whales.”

Renowned wildlife illustrator Pieter Folgens created the lifelike whale images for the Marine Mammal Institute, which is part of OSU’s College of Agricultural Sciences.

Flyers are being distributed by Oregon State Parks and Recreation volunteers during the annual “Whale Watching Spoken Here” celebration that runs between Christmas and New Year’s. Each flyer contains an expression-of-interest form. Between 10,000 and 25,000 whale watchers interact with the volunteers each year.

Interest can also be registered online at <http://mmi.oregonstate.edu/whaleplate>. No financial commitment is required, but it’s asked that only those serious about buying a Coastal Playground plate register.

Visible from the coastline year-round, gray whales migrate past Oregon in both directions on their annual journey between Alaska and Baja California. From late April to mid-June, northward-migrating females and their calves stay close to shore to avoid predation from killer whales.

Mate is banking on the enduring mystique of whales to help the Coastal Playground plate pay off for the Marine Mammal Institute.

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