



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

March 5, 2019

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More flexibility will give Oregon Ocean Science Trust a boost

SB 753: Allows OOST to contract with private nonprofit for operations

SALEM – The Oregon Ocean Science Trust took a big step forward today with the passage of a bill that will give it greater flexibility in terms of its operations and fund-raising.

[Senate Bill 753](#) – which passed by a 24-5 vote on the Senate floor today – authorizes the Oregon Ocean Science Trust to solicit a private non-profit organization to support the organization's work.

The Oregon Legislature established the Oregon Ocean Science Trust in 2013. Senate Bill 737, which passed both chambers with unanimous support, established OOST to promote peer-reviewed ocean and coastal resource research, as well as build on the state's commitment to marine reserves. This brought together a broad coalition of supporters – such as the Audubon Society of Portland, Our Ocean, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oceana, Surfrider Foundation and The Nature Conservancy – to help engage the public in stewardship.

The OOST comprises five voting members appointed by the State Land Board and two non-voting members from the Legislature – one Senator and one Representative. OOST has the potential to leverage significant financial support from the private sector for the following purposes:

- Innovative and collaborative research and technology required to improve the use and conservation of Oregon's marine resources; and

- Adopting new technologies that hold the promise of increasing job opportunities in our marine-related industries.

Oregon has chronically under-invested in nearshore research and management. Oregon's marine resources presently generate nearly a billion dollars in annual state income and support 40,000 jobs. OOST is expected to close the investment gaps to create scientific understanding of our nearshore ocean and create jobs.

Despite the absence of a budget, OOST has accomplished much, due primarily to the dedication and selflessness of its volunteer executive director from among its members. It has adopted bylaws, established funding priorities for nearshore research and monitoring, developed an inventory of current research and monitoring in the nearshore and adopted rules for the competitive grant program.

OOST remains a popular measure supported by the people of our state, regardless of region or political affiliation. SB 753 authorizes OOST's executive director to enter into agreement with a private, nonprofit organization under which the organization solicits gifts, grants and donations in support of the trust's work. The bill would make money from other sources eligible for deposit into the trust.

"Our state cannot afford to further postpone marshalling the resources needed to address the serious negative impact that climate change, ocean acidification and other harmful influences are having on our marine resources – negative influences that promise to take a significant toll on our coastal economies, if left unaddressed," Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, said. "We have an obligation to our constituents to finish the job we started in 2013 by funding the OOST."

Senate Bill 753 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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