

Theodore R. Kulongoski
Governor



December 13, 2005

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
230 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

I write to invite you to join me in an extraordinary endeavor to secure the long-term stewardship of the marine environment along our beautiful Oregon Coast. In consultation with the Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC), I will soon be requesting the Secretary of Commerce to designate an Oregon Coast National Marine Sanctuary and I ask for your enthusiastic support and assistance for this designation. I want to spell out what I believe are compelling reasons for us to seek such a Sanctuary, and why I believe the time for action is now.

My proposal for an Oregon Coast National Marine Sanctuary is founded on the historical commitment of Oregonians to the long-term conservation and protection of coastal and ocean resources. Oregonians desire vibrant coastal communities, healthy and resilient marine ecosystems, sustainable fisheries, clean and safe shorelines, and enjoyable and inspirational recreational opportunities. I believe that the unique state-federal partnership of a National Marine Sanctuary gives Oregon an opportunity to reinforce these longstanding values and commitment.

In 2004 the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy made clear that the nation's marine environment, ecosystems and economies are increasingly threatened by the hand of mankind through overuse, misuse, pollution, habitat loss, and climate change. As I prepared my response to the Commission, I learned that while the Pacific Ocean off Oregon has been spared many of the ills in other seas and we have done our best to try to protect ocean resources in state waters, the Oregon coast is not immune to these same forces and, in fact, we face growing challenges in protecting our ocean resources for the future.

To meet these challenges on behalf of future generations, I believe that we must act now. At present, there is no broad state-federal program, no agreed-upon plan of action or guiding principles to integrate federal and state interests across the entire continental margin off Oregon. A National Marine Sanctuary will enable Oregon and federal agencies to work collaboratively with tribes, ocean users, and the public to plan and manage all uses and resources based on sound science.

The Honorable Ron Wyden
December 13, 2005
Page Two

Currently, Oregon cannot afford the costs of marine research and monitoring nor the technical assistance required to plan for and manage ocean resources across our ocean area. A National Marine Sanctuary will give Oregon the opportunity to draw increased funding, technical support and other resources from a variety of federal programs for scientific research and monitoring to support resource management off our coast.

At present Oregon has jurisdiction only within three nautical miles of shore while the federal government has jurisdiction beyond. Oregon has long supported an ecosystem-based approach to resource conservation as demonstrated through our successful watershed restoration programs to promote coastal salmon recovery and habitat restoration. A National Marine Sanctuary will enable Oregon to work with federal agencies across this political boundary at an ecosystem scale to ensure that programs and regulations work together for the good of the marine ecosystem.

The starting point for public discussion of the size and location of the Oregon Coast National Marine Sanctuary is the Oregon Ocean Stewardship Area that the state has asserted as a matter of policy since 1991. This area extends from the Columbia River to the California border and from the ocean shore to the toe of the continental margin. Oregon most recently asserted this Ocean Stewardship Area in 2000 as part of amendments to Statewide Planning Goal 19, Ocean Resources.

Clearly a number of smaller sites, such as Heceta-Stonewall Banks, Rogue Canyon, Orford Reef, or Astoria Canyon are serious candidates for a National Marine Sanctuary as individual features. I believe, however, that a larger ecosystem-based approach to management, as called for in the Ocean Commission's report, is required to meet on-coming challenges. This would be a new model for the National Marine Sanctuary Program. I have asked OPAC to provide me with advice on the size of the sanctuary.

I want to highlight a few of the ways that I believe Oregon will benefit.

First, a National Marine Sanctuary is the only federal program that will give Oregon a seat at the table and a strong voice with appropriate federal agencies to develop a long-range plan to guide multiple-use management in this ocean area. Such a plan could address new ocean uses such as wave energy, ocean aquaculture and methane hydrate extraction.

Second, the threat of offshore oil and gas development continues to build through Congressional action. This threat must be ended once and for all by creating a National Marine Sanctuary for the Oregon Coast in which drilling for oil and gas will be prohibited.

Third, increased federal research funding and technical support will help Oregon to meet the need for better scientific information to manage marine resources.

Fourth, an Oregon Coast National Marine Sanctuary will boost tourism and travel on our coast by drawing national and international attention. National Marine Sanctuaries around the

The Honorable Ron Wyden
December 13, 2005
Page Three

country are magnets for nature travelers, outdoor adventurers, photographers and marine recreationists.

In addition, an Oregon Coast National Marine Sanctuary will help to support protection of other unique coastal areas such as the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve near Coos Bay, the Crook Point National Wildlife Refuge, Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area, Cascade Head U.N. Biosphere Reserve, the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the many coastal Oregon state parks with diverse marine rocky shore resources.

I want to emphasize that commercial and recreational fishing will continue within the sanctuary and will continue to be regulated by the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission based on the management plan for the sanctuary. As you know, a National Marine Sanctuary does not have separate authority to manage or regulate marine fisheries.

The sanctuary designation process required by federal law is thorough and will take time. It is a public process that will result in an environmental assessment and draft sanctuary management plan. Oregon will be fully engaged in this process through the Ocean Policy Advisory Council, as well as state agencies. Prior to formal designation, the Secretary of Commerce will be required to make findings that adequate funding is available and submit a report to the Congress. I will turn to you for guidance and assistance in the final designation steps.

This is a historic step for Oregon. I appreciate the amount of effort that this designation will require of all of us, but I believe that the legacy that we will leave to future generations will be well worth it.

I look forward to working with you.

Yours very truly,



THEODORE R. KULONGOSKI
Governor

TRK:mc:jm:tmt:jb

Originals of this letter were mailed to the Oregon Congressional Delegation:

Senator Ron Wyden
Senator Gordon Smith
Congressman David Wu
Congressman Greg Walden
Congressman Peter DeFazio
Congressman Earl Blumenauer
Congresswoman Darlene Hooley