

**Testimony of Avalyn Taylor, Conservation Outreach  
Coordinator for the Audubon Society of Portland, before the  
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy**

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Admiral Watkins, members of the Commission, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Avalyn Taylor, and I am the Conservation Outreach Coordinator for the Audubon Society of Portland. I would like to thank you for spending the last two days in Seattle talking to people in the Pacific Northwest about many important and complex issues relating to our oceans. I would also like to especially thank you for extending the public comment period to two hours, which demonstrates your commitment to listening to the concerns and ideas of local stakeholders in Oregon and Washington. Today I would like to talk about Audubon Society of Portland's priorities in Oregon regarding ocean protections, and offer some observations about the need for greater coordination between state and federal ocean policy and the establishment of a national network of marine protected areas (MPAs).

I represent the Audubon Society of Portland, a conservation organization working to promote the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of native birds and other wildlife and their habitats. We represent over 9,500 members in Oregon, and focus primarily on local community and the Pacific Northwest. I am testifying before you today because one of our main priorities during the past year has been to raise awareness in Oregon about the importance of a healthy and diverse marine environment off Oregon's coast. Founded in 1902, one of our organization's first victories the establishment of National Wildlife Refuges on the rocks and islands along the Oregon's coast in 1908. Over the past century, we have led thousands of schoolchildren and adults on field trips to the Oregon coast to learn about and experience nature in one of the richest coastal ecosystems in the world.

Realizing the intricate connections between upland, coastal, and marine ecosystems, we recently broadened our conservation efforts to address the need for greater protections for Oregon's amazing diverse but fragile marine environment. Audubon Society of Portland and the other ten Audubon chapters in Oregon strongly support the establishment of a network of MPAs in Oregon's Territorial Sea and adjacent federal waters. Audubon Society of Portland and the National Audubon Society are members of the Ocean Wilderness Network, a regional coalition of conservation organizations dedicated to establishing a network of marine protected areas and fully protected marine reserves in the Pacific Ocean from Alaska to California. We support the establishment of fully-protected marine reserves because they are useful and flexible tools for solving multiple problems and achieving multiple goals, including the protection of ocean biodiversity and critical ecosystem processes.

Currently, the Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC), a state ocean advisory body that reports to the Governor, is assessing whether marine reserves would be useful tools for achieving Oregon's statewide conservation goals. Because of the compelling amount of evidence demonstrating the conservation benefits provided by marine reserves, the Audubon Society of Portland applauds the OPAC for acknowledging that marine reserves could be beneficial for biodiversity conservation in its Draft Recommendation to the Governor. As you heard earlier today from Nan Evans, Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal 19 requires that Oregon manage its ocean resources for the long term social, economic, and ecological benefits to future generations, and places a higher priority on the protection of renewable ocean resources than on the extraction of non-renewable ocean resources. We have closely monitored the OPAC process leading up to this draft recommendation on marine reserves, and we commend Oregon for initiating an open dialogue on marine reserves in Oregon's communities through this process.

In 1987, Oregon declared an Ocean Stewardship Area that extends from shore to the edge of the continental shelf, which asserts a state interest in activities occurring beyond the Territorial Sea to adjacent federal waters on the continental shelf. Because of the decision by the OPAC to address the value of marine reserves for the entire Ocean Stewardship Area, the recommendation to the Governor will consider *both* state *and* federal waters off Oregon. Despite the fact that this recommendation will be based upon ecosystem based management, the decision to include federal waters in the recommendation led to much confusion. According to my observations, the OPAC has struggled with the idea of making a recommendation for federal waters largely because of a lack of understanding about whom such a recommendation should address, and what exactly it would accomplish. One commentator at a recent OPAC meeting said how stricken she was by the fact that a room full of Oregon ocean experts were confused about the implications of their making a recommendation for federal waters. This confusion, she said, clearly indicates the need for a comprehensive federal ocean policy.

The OPAC process would be much better served if there were a federal oceans department to which they could address their recommendation for marine reserves in federal waters off Oregon and future recommendations for activities taking place in the Ocean Stewardship Area. Having one or more federal representatives sit on the OPAC would also enhance opportunities for cooperation and coordination. As state and federal agencies move toward developing ecosystem-based approaches to resource management, they must be cognizant of the fact that ocean wildlife is ignorant of political boundaries. As we move into a new era of scientific understanding about the intricate links between various elements within ecological communities, we must also realize that our sometimes rigid political boundaries must overlap.

We view the OPAC process assessing marine reserves as a true "bottom-up" process, yet currently there is no "top down" mandate that would connect statewide initiatives and place them in a national framework. As Kathy Fletcher of People for Puget Sound said in her testimony yesterday regarding "top-down" versus "bottom up" processes, there is a need for us to use both models, and they should be viewed as complimentary rather than contradictory. We recommend that the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy take a

proactive role in protecting ocean biodiversity and vital ocean ecosystems by creating a legislative mandate for the establishment of a national network of marine protected areas, including fully protected marine reserves, incorporating the local, statewide, and regional initiatives that are currently taking steps to develop small-scale networks of MPAs. We also recommend the strengthening of the MPA Executive Orders to provide more funding for MPA management and research. It is only by gaining more knowledge of how our ocean ecosystems function that we can preserve bountiful and diverse oceans for the future.

One of my primary tasks over the past year has been to raise awareness in Oregon about the threats to marine ecosystems and the tools available for protecting ocean biodiversity. I have attended dozens of meetings with stakeholders of ocean resources and driven thousands of miles around Oregon. I have also given about thirty presentations on marine reserves around the state to everyone from college students in Eugene to fisherman's groups in Port Orford, and talked to people from all walks of life about ocean protections. Needless to say, during this time, I have learned an enormous amount about Oregon, the Pacific Ocean, and the deep connection that people have with the ocean. Through these experiences I have learned that Oregon's wild and beautiful coastline and the vast ocean beyond it are a tremendous source of pride to Oregonians. Mostly, I have learned that people with very different interests can find common ground through a shared commitment to preserving this treasure. As John Berry of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation said yesterday, "When people care, and care deeply enough, miracles happen." I sincerely hope that your recommendation sets the stage for the long-term conservation and restoration of wild and healthy oceans.

Thank you very much, and I wish you the best in developing your recommendation.