



Date: December 10th, 2019

To: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Education
Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET)

Re: Letter of Support for 2020 B-WET Project Application

Project Title: Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) by the Sea IV: Creating Coastal Connections

Good afternoon,

As the Co-Chairs of the legislatively created Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (or “OAH Council”), we appreciate the opportunity to provide you with a letter of support for the B-WET project submission of “MWEEs by the Sea IV: Creating Coastal Connections”. This project collaboration between the Oregon State University, Oregon Sea Grant, South Slough NERR, Tillamook Estuaries Partnership, and NOAA NWFSC will provide a strong team of regional and local experts who will be well equipped to implement this project. The goals of Creating Coastal Connections directly relate to environmental education needs already identified by the State of Oregon within the Oregon OAH Action Plan 2019-2025, and will aid the State in supporting prioritization of OAH research, education and outreach by Oregon professionals. Because of this, we the co-chairs of the OAH Council highly encourage NOAA to consider funding this important community initiative.

Oregon is among the first places in the world to observe direct impacts of OAH, due to our unique geographic and oceanographic context, putting our fragile marine ecosystems and coastal communities at risk. Our nearshore waters are home to sport and commercial fisheries, all of the State’s mariculture operations, and contain critical nursery grounds for economically important species including rockfish, oysters, salmon, pink shrimp, Dungeness crab, and others. Raising awareness of intensifying OAH conditions here in Oregon through educational programs and trainings is critical to our understanding of larger regional climate change impacts and addressing these impacts here along the Oregon coast.

In September 2018, the OAH Council submitted our first biennial report to the Oregon Legislature, which directly identified the need to raise awareness of OAH science, impacts, and solutions through education (see Theme 4). The Creating Coastal Connections program, if funded, would offer an enormous opportunity to Oregon’s rural coastal communities, and is anticipated to serve a minimum of 20 educators and 600 students, with a special effort to recruit educators serving minority populations. By focusing their project on ocean acidification and ecosystem resiliency, the proposed project team works to connect education and outreach actions with audience values, which is one of many emphasis of the OAH Report. The Creating Coastal Connections program also directly address two key audiences for

communications identified in the OAH Report actions, K-12 school educators and students (Action 4.2.c) and informal education venues (Action 4.2.g)¹.

The Creating Coastal Connections project, aims to host a three day workshop at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport, Oregon for K-12 school educators and students. The proposed project will also be hosting webinars with regional experts and researchers to provide information on the scientific basis of OAH and associated climate issues for teachers of 3rd – 12th grade students; teachers can then use the information to develop, adapt, and/or implement curricula. Professional development opportunities, such as those in the Creating Coastal Connections Project, provide important opportunities to regional educators to gain access to field experiences, and connect participants to coastal community partners involving OAH and ecosystem resiliency managers and scientific experts.

At the completion of the Creating Coastal Connections project, it is proposed that students will have the opportunity to attend one of three Student Watershed Symposia held at partner sites along the coast, to share their results with peers, community partners, researchers, resource managers, and the general public. The use of this informal education venue would engage the general public and would be an important way to raise awareness of OAH. Interactive learning for students and educators is directly identified in the OAH Report and works to promote long-term regional learning of OAH issues.

As Co-Chairs to Oregon's OAH Council, we support the development audience-specific programs on OAH science, impacts, and solutions to increase awareness and understanding of the impacts of OAH on our ecosystems and communities. Currently, the OAH Council is in the processes of standing up a new Communications and Outreach Working Group. It is our aim that over the course of the next year, the Working Group will help to inform an Oregon based OAH Communication Plan and Evaluation Framework. The principal investigator of the Creating Coastal Connections project (Tracy Crews) will be serving on the newly created Working Group, by providing technical assistance. The OAH Council thinks that this connection will not only aid the implementation of the proposed project by providing the project team with a wider regional context for their work, but will also aid the Working Group in observing the implementation of our OAH science education goals here in Oregon. Once again we would like to strongly support funding "MWEEs by the Sea IV: Creating Coastal Connections" B-WET project.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter of support and we welcome any questions.

Sincerely,

John Barth, PhD



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¹ Barth, J.A., C.E. Braby, F. Barcellos, K. Tarnow, A. Lanier, J. Sumich, S. Walker, F. Recht, A. Pazar, L. Xin, A. Galloway, J. Schaefer, K. Sheeran, C. M. Regula-Whitefield. The Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia. First Biennial Report. September 2018. <https://www.oregonocean.info/index.php/ocean-documents/oah-hypox/oah-council-1st-biennial-report/1841-oah-council-1st-biannual-report-sept-15th-2018-smaller-file-size/file>