

JOHN A. KITZHABER, MD
GOVERNOR



July 22, 2013

The Honorable John F. Reed, Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate Washington, DC
20510

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson,
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James P. Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Members:

The President's budget for Fiscal Year 2014 eliminates all federal funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Beach Grant Program. Authorized under the Clean Water Act and the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act, this program provides grants to states to monitor water quality at beaches and to notify the public when water quality exceeds applicable national standards. EPA's proposal to eliminate the \$9.8 million Beach Program from its FY 2014 budget will risk endangering the health and safety of millions of beachgoers and swimmers across the nation and, consequently, the multi-billion coastal, tourism and recreation economies they support.

EPA has told states they are proposing this reduction because the beach monitoring and public notification programs are well established and no longer need federal funding to continue. The rationale did not assert these programs were not needed or effective in preventing illnesses resulting from water contact with fecal contaminated water. The premise of this proposed funding reduction is incorrect. Without continued funding, Oregon will be forced to cut its beach water quality monitoring and public health advisory programs in their entirety.

This will put at risk the health and safety of visitors to our state's beaches. Information from the beach monitoring program has helped local governments in Oregon identify sources of fecal contamination, such as sewage connections to storm sewers and creeks that outlet to public beaches. This has led to the targeted use of limited local resources to correct real problems and provide the greatest environmental benefits. Addressing these issues not only improves the health and water quality of our nearshore ocean environment, but also creates jobs, improves the quality of life and sustainability of coastal communities and demonstrates long term investment in these communities. In addition, for the first time in Oregon, beaches along our coast have been added to the 303d list of impaired water bodies, further underscoring the need to maintain monitoring programs.

Under the BEACH Act EPA is required to implement a monitoring and notification program when a state has no program (Section 4 (h)). The Oregon Beach monitoring program is a successful and cost effective program developed and implemented in collaboration with local governments whose economies depend upon a safe and healthy coastal environment.

As the Subcommittee reviews FY 2014 appropriations for Interior, Environment and related agencies, please consider restoring level funding for the EPA Beach Grant Program at \$9.8 million. This is a small investment to make to protect the US beach-going public and coastal tourism economies across the country.

Sincerely,



Gabriela Goldfarb
Natural Resources Policy Advisor

cc:

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, US Senator
The Honorable Ron Wyden, US Senator
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer, US Congressman
The Honorable Susan Bonamici, US Congresswoman
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, US Congressman
The Honorable Kurt Schrader, US Congressman
The Honorable Greg Walden, US Congressman
Mel Kohn, Director, Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division
Dick Pedersen, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality