Mr. Steven Hoffert, Chair  
Oregon Geographic Information Council  
530 Airport Rd SE  
Salem, OR 97301  

Dear Mr. Hoffert,

Serving as the BioScience Framework Implementation Team (FIT) lead, I would like to offer this letter of support for the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS) Biotic Component data development for Seagrass and Canopy forming Algal Beds project funding proposal. This proposal describes a project that will clearly benefit the Oregon Framework Program, addresses a known data gap for the state of Oregon, and identifies how the deliverables will be made easily accessible.

The Proposal Point of Contact, Tanya Haddad, is the lead for the Coastal Marine Framework Implementation Team, and this proposal highlights many connections between the project and the Oregon Framework program. Framework elements directly benefited or addressed through this project include aquatic species and ranges, aquatic vegetation, and more specifically the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification. Foundational Framework elements are directly used in this project, and some of the intermediary outputs of this project can be used to benefit secondary framework data elements including geology, geomorphology, shorelines, and wetlands.

This project address a very important gap in habitat mapping for two high priority aquatic species (eelgrass and kelp). Among many other benefits, these resources provide critical habitat for many Oregon fish and wildlife species, including many species identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Deliverables from this project will be able to be used in a variety of ways, as they will be easily accessible for download via the Oregon Coastal Atlas, hosted in publically available web services, and posted in the Oregon Spatial Data Library.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions related to this letter of support at Arthur.H.Rodriguez@odfw.oregon.gov.

Sincerely,

Arthur Rodriguez  
BioScience Framework Implementation Team Lead  
Oregon Conservation Strategy GIS Analyst, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
June 30, 2021

Cy Smith
Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office
635 Capitol St. NE #150
Salem, OR 97301.

Re: CMECS Biotic Component Data Development for Seagrass and Canopy Forming Algal Beds

Dear Mr. Smith:

I would like to express my support for the project entitled “CMECS Biotic Component Data Development for Seagrass and Canopy Forming Algal Beds” as proposed by the Oregon Coastal Management Program, Department of Land Conservancy and Development. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Marine Resources Program depends on accurate and up-to-date maps of marine habitats for meeting our natural resource management responsibilities. Kelp beds and Eelgrass beds are critical marine habitats that provide feeding and nursery areas for numerous marine species important to Oregon’s commercial and recreational fisheries. In some areas, these habitats are experiencing declines due to climate and ocean change, and other factors. Developing and updating maps of these habitats using traditional methods is expensive and time consuming, and we lack the resources to update habitat maps frequently enough to detect these declines early on and monitor ongoing status. For example, the last time we updated kelp bed habitat maps was 2010. The project proposes to develop techniques to map these habitats using satellite imagery, which will allow us to monitor the status of these habitats on a short enough time scale to detect changes and take appropriate management action to minimize impacts to natural resources.

The proposed project will be a collaborative effort among our staff, DLCD, and other agencies. We have a long history of successful collaborations with DLCD on marine resource research and management. We will provide staff resources to support this project and will do everything we can to ensure the project is successful.

If you have any questions about Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s support for this project, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

David Fox
Marine Resource Assessment Section Leader
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
July 7, 2021

Cy Smith,
Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office
635 Capitol St. NE #150
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Cy,

This letter is in support of the Framework Data Development project titled “CMECS Biotic Component Data Development for Seagrass and Canopy forming Algal Beds” being submitted for funding by the Institute for Natural Resources at Portland State University.

The Oregon Coastal Management Program (OCMP) has a strong interest in the creation and stewardship of data that conforms to the Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS). OCMP has been working on assembling habitat data that conforms to the CMECS standard since 2013, when Oregon was the first state in the country to apply CMECS to all its estuaries. The work described in this proposal is a natural extension of that work and is another step towards a continuous, seamless CMECS data set from the head of tide to the depths of the territorial sea.

The project's focus on use of remote sensing to map eelgrass and kelp is particularly valuable, as these habitats are extremely important to coastal ecosystems and would require enormous resources to survey comprehensively in the field. Several agencies in the OCMP network have obligations to protect these habitats and are collaborating on the working group for this project. We all recognize that successful regulatory and management decisions, including our own Federal Consistency reviews under the Coastal Zone Management Act and work on Territorial Sea planning, rely on accurate, up-to-date habitat information, which this proposal will help make possible.

In addition to state agency applications, CMECS data and the Biotic Component in particular, has enormous potential to be used in local government estuary planning, and we have begun work to encourage the adoption of CMECS into updated estuary plans. As a result, improvements to the CMECS data sets will directly improve protection of aquatic beds within estuaries. We see these activities as in-line with coastal management objectives, as well as recent recommended actions from the Oregon Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia Council and the Oregon Global Warming Commission.
Thank you for your consideration of the proposal, and I am happy to answer any further questions you may have regarding our commitment to this effort,

Sincerely,

Patricia Snow
Program Manager
Oregon Coastal Management Program
Department of Land Conservation and Development
June 29, 2021

Oregon Geographic Information Council (OGIC) Framework Development Program
Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office
framework.funding@oregon.gov

Re: Letter of Support for OGIC Framework Development Program Proposal

Dear OGIC Framework Development Review Panel:

The South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (SSNERR) is pleased to support the OGIC Framework Development proposal entitled *CMECS Biotic Component Data Development for Seagrass and Canopy-forming Algal Beds*. This project will provide an ongoing source of data on the spatial extent of eelgrass and kelp along the Oregon Coast, which is vital for understanding and monitoring the habitat for these important native species. Both provide critical habitat for many native aquatic species, some of which are economically and culturally important to our communities.

Alarmingly, the South Slough estuary has seen mass die-offs of native eelgrass in recent years. Coupled with infrequent eelgrass extent mapping in the Coos Estuary (completed in 1978, 2005, and 2016) our current understanding of eelgrass habitat is incomplete. The proposed framework data will fill the knowledge gap by providing timelier and more consistent eelgrass habitat maps. This will be especially crucial as ocean and estuary conditions change (e.g., expected increased frequency and intensity of marine heat waves, sea-level rise, and coastal inundation).

Understanding where these species can have higher resiliency to those pressures will provide much-needed data to the Reserve and our community partners as we address how to best manage the estuary. Information gained from this project will greatly enhance the Reserve’s research and can be immediately applied to eelgrass restoration efforts by identifying areas in the estuary most likely to support successful restoration efforts. The data may also be applied at the national level through priorities identified by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to develop standardized system-wide protocols for mapping and monitoring submerged aquatic vegetation throughout the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). The NERRS
is also interested in monitoring habitat change at the landscape-scale and data from this project would allow temporal and spatial analyses to compare priority habitats (i.e., seagrass beds).

Thank you for your consideration of the proposal and the opportunity to express our support for this much-needed project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Bree K. Yednock, PhD
Reserve Manager