



Tillamook County Board of Commissioners

201 Laurel Avenue, Tillamook, OR 97141

Phone: 503-842-3403

TTY Oregon Relay Service

Bill Baertlein, Chair

Mary Faith Bell, Vice-Chair

David Yamamoto, Commissioner

April 3, 2020

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

Dear Commissioners,

Tillamook County urges the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to consider a closure of recreational and commercial clamming for the immediate future until the risk of spreading COVID-19 subsides.

Tillamook County is in crisis mode and with the Washington Fish and Wildlife closing their beaches we are headed towards a major influx of people from Washington and Willamette Valley where COVID-19 is far more prevalent than in Tillamook County. I am concerned that the sheltering at home that is being done by our residents will be for naught if we get another invasion like two weeks ago. It was after the rush from Washington on spring break that we ended up with our first cases of the virus.

We have been informed of face book posts by the commercial clam harvesters from Washington of doing a coordinated rush to overwhelm our closed boat launches in Tillamook. We have seen first-hand the bad behavior coming from Washington over spring break. Much as Mardi Gras has overwhelmed the New Orleans medical facilities this continued influx of vectors from the Willamette Valley and Washington has the potential of doing the same to our local facilities. Our only hospital has 25 beds for a population of 26,000. Allowing the clam season to continue will put every one of these residents at additional risk and adds to the potential of overwhelming our medical facilities.

What is unfortunate is that many of the bay claims that are commercially harvested is for crab bait, not sustenance or market for consumption. It is flat out wrong to put our citizens at risk for bait, not sustenance.

The United States, State of Oregon and Tillamook County have all declared National, State and County emergencies. We are at war with an unseen enemy. This contagion will require all of us working as a team to defeat. Please protect the citizens of Tillamook County by closing recreational and commercial clamming for the duration of this pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Baertlein".

Bill Baertlein, Chair
Tillamook County Commissioner