

4th Annual Heceta Head Coastal Conference

"Oregon's Ocean: Changes & Consequences"

Florence Events Center ~ October 24-25, 2008

SUMMARY of CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Saturday, October 25

Workshop

By consensus, round-table discussion groups prepared short statements on the Panel issues. Here follows a representative sampling.

Ocean Climate Change

- Ecosystems in their natural state are more resilient. Stresses created by climate change will make resilience all the more important. Anything that increases both the scientific information base and public awareness will help us cope.
- We need a system of marine reserves representing various ecosystem habitats that strengthen resilience from climate change and other impacts. For development of this system we need to minimize economic harm along the coast.
- Resilience through diversity. To reconfigure our thinking and cultural priorities, emphasize the holistic interconnectedness of coastal communities and resources. This should be done through grass roots community-based education and outreach efforts, such as town festivals.
- There is a need for long-term, consistent monitoring to document and understand changes due to global warming. Develop low-cost monitoring using automated instruments offshore, using volunteer monitors.

Building an Ocean Legacy

- We recommend the development of collaborative groups in every coastal community that will establish a common vision for a healthy ocean legacy.
- Community-based ocean user groups such as POORT provide an excellent model for collaborative relationships. They can lead to the establishment of marine reserves and stewardship areas, especially watersheds that impact reserves. Educational program at the elemental level are crucial.
- What happened with the POORT effort is worthy of study as a possible model of community collaboration. In particular, linking onshore watersheds to the nearshore ocean.
- We recommend the Port Orford and Depoe Bay initiatives for marine reserves, as they illustrate a community process that includes all stakeholders. We encourage the framers of state and regional policies to maintain our local control and responsibility.
- Building an ocean legacy will take partnerships and innovative approaches. At both the community and state levels, advisory bodies much be diverse with proportional representation.

Salmon Closure

- The salmon problem won't be solved in Oregon alone, or in the ocean alone. We must look at all factors

that affect the larger system, particularly those onshore where the habitat problems are.

- Salmon are a significant part of Oregon's history. Variability in ocean conditions and issues with habitat loss and degradation have painted a grim picture of salmon future. The state should examine what the ultimate goal for salmon is. Is it harvest? Sustaining coastal economics? Maintaining? Oregon's heritage? If harvest is the goal, then the state should consider terminal harvest, policies to ensure favorable habitat, and look to Alaska's management of salmon fishing as a model.
- Recent salmon closures remind us we have neglected too many aspects of earth's habitats for too long. With uncontrolled population growth and unsustainable resource use, humans have "broken the last straw" in survival. It's time for marine reserves, including rivers and watersheds in the mix. Fishermen are only the first to face the consequences of our neglect.
- Weak salmon runs must be protected. Fisheries management today must cope better with dramatic change and be more flexible. We need real-time ecosystem data for better management.
- Respect genetic diversity and point of geographic origin of salmon stocks.
- Fishing has to be controlled and sustainable at all times. An equitable distribution must be achieved among and within sectors of the fishing community.
- Be precautionary...weather is cyclical and so are salmon runs. Learn from the past mistakes, that is, adaptive management.

Marine Reserves

- We believe in a network of marine reserves; they can contribute to fisheries management and scientific investigation. They have intrinsic worth.
- We will never know everything or enough to satisfy skeptics but we do know enough to move forward with forming a network of marine reserves that include more than one example of Oregon's ocean richness. Action should happen sooner rather than later; the situation is complicated today and the forecast is that the situation in the ocean is not likely to get any simpler. Some new issues, like ocean acidification and enhancing resiliency, make protecting intact habitats a common sense approach. Fishers must be part of the science to aid in the transition. People must have a way to express their views without fear of retaliation.

Conference as a Whole

The Conference was an excellent start toward multi-directional (i.e. science, stakeholders, managers, policy makers) exchange of ideas, which is critical. Concern persists regarding representation of other perspectives, despite apparent consensus regarding ecosystem-based management. Consensus suggests transition from basic research/management to advocacy is necessary. Upward flow of information is critical! Local problems have global origins, and local stakeholders need to make this known.

Margaret Mead's Statement

"Never underestimate the power of a small, committed group to change the world. In fact, that's all that ever has."