

South Lincoln County News

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Common Ground Film Fills City Hall

Waldport (OR) Forty people filled Waldport City Hall last Thursday to attend the Community Issues Forum of South Lincoln County featuring the acclaimed documentary, *Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean*. The audience included city councilors, commercial and sport fishermen, port commissioners, and interested citizens from Lincoln County. An hour and a half long lively panel discussion with the audience followed the film. Panel members included Sarah Dudas, Oregon State University; Onno Husing, Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association (OCZMA); Paul Engelmeyer, member of Oregon's Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC); Joe Rohleder, sportfisherman; and Carolyn Waldron, Director of Oregon Ocean.

Nancy E. Leonard, City Manager of Waldport commented after the film, "I think it is crucial to educate coastal citizens about our marine ecosystems, and this documentary did a splendid job of highlighting the issues. It has taken years to have a majority of people understand the importance of a healthy inland watershed, and now it is time to connect all the dots and realize the importance of the marine environment. I fully support the establishment of marine reserves in some manner. With a film like this, decision makers have a better opportunity to understand the nature of this important issue. "

"This film is amazing, it's really wonderful to be able to see what the ocean looks like, and I learned a lot about what we can do to protect ocean habitat so that we have a healthy ocean and healthy coastal communities," said Craig Murk of Yachats.

After the film screened, many people in the audience wanted to know what Oregon is doing in terms of establishing marine reserves as a way to protect ocean ecosystems and enhance fisheries, Paul Engelmeyer, the statewide conservation member of Oregon's Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) responded, "The current OPAC is considering a limited network of marine reserves in state waters. What's clear is that a "bottom-up approach"—meaning community involvement from interested citizens, scientists, policymakers and fishermen—will make for the most successful marine reserve network."

Carolyn Waldron of Oregon Ocean and Joe Rohleder, sport fisherman from Waldport agreed that action is needed to protect Oregon's ocean, it's a matter of agreeing on the details; Waldron noted that "most agree we want thriving coastal communities, a sustainable economy and stable fisheries--agreeing on the specifics and determining how best to achieve this goal is the heart of the challenge."

Questions also came from the audience about how fishermen would be affected by marine reserves. Sarah Dudas of Oregon State University related that having both commercial and sport fisherman provide input during the planning process can greatly reduce the impact on fishermen.

A Newport commercial fisherman in the audience added that even with the severe decline in number of fish he is able to catch today, the cost per pound of fish has increased so that he is still making the same amount of money. Sarah Dudas let people know that opportunities exist for cooperative research, involving fishermen in the gathering of pertinent information related to fishery management.

Audience members were curious as to how marine reserves were designated, where would they be sited and how large or small they would be. Sarah Dudas stressed that it all depends on the goal for the marine reserves network. Did we want to protect key ocean habitat types or enhance fisheries? Depending on the goals, there is usually a lot of variability in terms of where marine reserves are sited.

Dudas shared, "Marine reserves have been shown to increase biomass, the amount of animals and plants, by as much as 413% and diversity of animals and plants by 71%. Science can help us understand the need for marine reserves, and the response of the system to the reserves. However, the first step for any marine reserve is setting the goals, such as biodiversity and habitat protection, and that is the job of policy makers and the community."

Members of the audience raised their concerns about how land management affects ocean health. Forest uplands are linked to the estuaries and out to the ocean, eventually impacting ocean habitat, fisheries, and our coastal economy. For example logging in the uplands silts in estuaries and streams, leading to declining fish productivity. As well the reduced salmon catch this year in the ocean is directly tied to how we have managed the Klamath River. Water for farmers has reduced water for salmon. Both the Pew Oceans Commission Report and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy advised that we improve management in our watersheds, which will improve the health of our ocean.

Panelists agreed that there should be a "bottom up approach" with input from scientists, citizens, policymakers and fishermen in order to designate marine reserves in Oregon's territorial sea. Onno Husing of OCZMA, who serves on OPAC, commented, "Today, people are a lot closer to reaching agreement on these issues than some people think. Tremendous improvements in fisheries management have already been put in place in federal waters beyond three miles, including enormous no-fish areas. OPAC needs to focus on determining what the unfinished business is within state waters out to three miles. OPAC is working on that." OPAC meets regularly and public comment is taken. As OPAC moves forward they will hold community meetings to gather input from stakeholders—meaning all of us.

For more information go to www.oceansonline.org