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Save the resource

At age 27, when I made the decision to become a charter boat captain, I knew there was a risk associated with wholly relying on a natural resource to drive my income. My business has suffered through the crash of the wild coho, the closure of the world-famous Buoy 10 fishery and the downturn of our offshore rockfish species.

There have been good times and there have been bad, but overall, the recent trend of our ocean resources is headed in a dangerous downward spiral. The Oregon recreational fleet went from no bag limits on rockfish prior to 1976, to an allowable catch of 25 rockfish per person per day. In 2000, we were allowed 10 and currently, we're only allowed 6 rockfish. These restrictions were put in place as a necessary measure to prevent the collapse of the stock.

Fishery managers feel they have a grip on this downward trend but I feel there are two important criteria in their management scheme that are missing: changes in ocean temperatures and acidity and a growing population with an insatiable appetite for seafood.

With these two very real threats to our ocean ecosystems, it makes so much sense to approach our ensuing crisis in a pro-active manner. That is why our coastal communities should be taking a hard look at the benefits of marine reserves.

As the science shows, older, larger females contribute almost 10 times the number of juveniles to the ocean, as older fish and their offspring are more capable of enduring a changing marine ecosystem. Marine reserves provide the opportunity for fish to grow larger and produce the kinds of numbers to feed our people and sustain the population - a sort of offshore rockfish hatchery. This is just one of many reasons why the establishment of marine reserves is a critical tool in rebuilding fish populations and ensuring a resource for our children's future. In the coming months, it will be important for Oregon's citizens to participate in the public process to consider the establishment of marine reserves.

My grandfathers took me fishing and introduced me to a world I had no idea existed. My hope is that there is a resource that allows me to continue to make a living and feed my family, but more importantly, a resource to share with my grandchildren so they have the same opportunities that I did. To learn more about the science behind marine reserves, go to www.pisco.org/outreach/pubs/reserves

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