

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSENSUS STATEMENT

In February 2006, Cheryl Coon (Portland Audubon) and Jim Martin (Berkeley Conservation Institute, a division of Pure Fishing) met to talk about marine protection in Oregon. We agreed on the need for open-minded, committed Oregonians representing a variety of interests to explore together questions about the state of the Oregon's ocean. With the active participation of trusted scientists, we envisioned the development of collaborative solutions to agreed-upon problems, hoping thereby to avoid the divisiveness that has affected similar efforts in California.

We invited a small group of individuals to participate in an initial meeting in April 2006. Six invitees (Jim Martin, Cheryl Coon, Pete Stauffer, Carolyn Waldron, Frank Warrens and Liz Hamilton) discussed their views of the status of Oregon's ocean. The group then agreed to develop a "core group" who would be invited to future meetings to discuss issues and brainstorm solutions.

Encouraged by our candid exchange of views, we scheduled a second meeting for July 2006. At the July meeting in Portland, we benefited from the addition to our group of Dr. Mark Hixon, an expert in the ecology of coastal marine fish and Chair of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee, and Jim Golden, an expert in fisheries management and consultant on the POORT project in Port Orford. In preparation for this meeting, the group read a series of papers. At the meeting, we listened to the scientists' shared perceptions about the problems and solutions. We also had the services of a professional facilitator who has remained involved.

The next meeting took place in January 2007. On the prior afternoon, many invitees went fishing together. It was an important trust-building experience that allowed folks to get to know each other better under relaxed circumstances. Based on the success of the outing, we concluded that future meetings would offer an opportunity for relaxed relationship-building on the afternoon before. At this meeting, the group decided to expand the number of participants. We also decided to develop a statement of what we could agree on thus far, using as a basis the work done and discussed with us by scientists Mark Hixon and Jim Golden.

At subsequent meetings in April, May and June of 2007, the group reviewed and refined drafts of the Consensus Statement. Our June meeting also included guests Jessica Hamilton (Governor's Office) and Steve Ralston, NOAA Fisheries, Santa Cruz, California; vice-chair of the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, who talked with us about "lessons learned" from California's experiences.

In July 2007 we reached a unanimous agreement on a final version of our Consensus Statement.

CONSENSUS STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS: WHAT WE AGREE ON THUS FAR

1. Our goal is a healthy ecosystem that provides services and values to humans.
2. Challenges to ocean health include:
 - a. Global warming;
 - b. Habitat destruction;
 - c. Over-exploitation;
 - d. Invasive species;
 - e. Pollution, including authorized uses of pesticides and herbicides;
 - f. Synergistic and cumulative effects, including those due to land-sea connections, such as coastal development, altered water regimes, diking, road building and agricultural and timber practices.
3. The reasons for uncertainty in ocean resource status include:
 - a. Environmental variability: seasonal and decadal variation, as well as directional change due to global warming, and impacts of these changes on marine life;
 - b. Uncertainty in abundance of stocks which are either not surveyed or lack sufficient assessment data to adequately determine stock status;
 - c. Inadequate funding for conducting stock assessments and ecological monitoring;
 - d. Inadequate evaluation of the efficacy of management measures
4. Marine Protected Areas including marine reserves may be useful tools to accomplish the following:
 - a. Preserve genetic, age, and spatial structure of populations;
 - b. Act as reference areas to measure impacts of fishing outside the protected area by inside vs. outside comparisons;
 - c. Provide refugia to maintain biodiversity;
 - d. Protect seafloor habitats from human-caused disturbance;
 - e. Provide relatively intact ecosystems, which are known to be more resistant and resilient to environmental variability
5. The tool (for example, marine reserves or marine protected areas) is not the goal.

6. We support precautionary management principles. Precautionary management involves the application of prudent foresight in ocean resource management, including fisheries management, characterized by:
 - a. Fisheries that are sustainable¹ and management that considers needs of future generations;
 - b. Knowledge of undesirable outcomes is identified and measures are in place to avoid them;
 - c. Avoidance of actions that may not be reversible;
 - d. Management that gives priority to conserving productive capacity if impacts are uncertain;
 - e. Fishing capacity is restrained when impacts to resource productivity are highly uncertain;
 - f. Use of a framework plan that establishes reference levels for the fishery and appropriate actions when reference levels are achieved or exceeded;
 - g. In addition to the above FAO guidelines, we characterize precautionary management as adaptive and sensitive to needs of communities.
 - h. Alternatives to present management should be explored which provide more flexibility to achieve resource, habitat, and ecosystem conservation goals²;
 - i. In addition, precautionary and adaptive management includes evaluation of past and proposed actions.

7. Based on the available evidence, we perceive the state of Oregon and West Coast marine fisheries, ecosystem and fisheries management to be as follows:
 - a. Status of marine fisheries:
 - i. Healthy for some species: Dungeness crab and ocean shrimp are good examples.

 - ii. Oregon terrestrial and adjacent ocean environments are host to 22 marine species of fish, birds, reptiles, and mammals listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. Ten of the listed species include threatened stocks of salmon and steelhead. Of these, 3 stocks of Chinook salmon and 2 stocks of Coho salmon are of particular concern and influence shaping of ocean fishing seasons and limits for salmon. Three bird species (brown pelican, marbled Murrelet, and snowy plover) receive special management attention in the nearshore due to their status. Of the 4 mammals in this group, the northern Stellar sea lion also receives special management attention in Oregon's nearshore coastal waters.

¹ By sustainable, we mean long-term catches with low variability without population or ecosystem degradation given the life history characteristics of the species involved. For some species, sustainable fisheries can be at very low levels of abundance. For long-lived species innately vulnerable to overexploitation, sustainable fisheries can mean very low exploitation rates and a significant proportion of the spawning biomass being held intact.

² This means to not just pile more measures on top of existing conservation measures without evaluating other alternatives, and/or having some means of evaluating actions.

iii. A mixed score exists for groundfishes. There are more than 90 exploited species of groundfish, of which 32 have been assessed. Overfished groundfish species presently constitute about 8% of exploited groundfish species (22% of assessed species. Specifically:

1. Of 7 over-fished rockfish species, canary rockfish appears not to be responding to management measures, but a new assessment is underway. Based on the most recent rebuilding analysis, yelloweye rockfish is also behind on its rebuilding schedule and optimum yield has been accordingly reduced. Both canary rockfish and yelloweye rockfish are important nearshore and shelf species of the Oregon coast. Federal rebuilding management policies have significant impact on fisheries in state waters as well. Boccacio, widow rockfish, and darkblotched rockfish have definitely turned around and are rebuilding.
2. The Dover sole, thornyhead, sablefish complex (including blackgill rockfish) appears to be healthy, although sablefish is at a low enough level to be managed under the Council's pre-cautionary 40:10 rule.
3. Lingcod has been rebuilt and several species of flatfish appear to have robust populations.
4. Hake, a major offshore fishery, may have to have harvest reductions due to the lack of recruitment.
5. Little is known about the status of many stocks, especially nearshore species.

iv. Remaining fisheries are of unknown status.

b. Status of marine ecosystem:

i. Uncertain due to:

1. Lack of monitoring:
 - a. Bycatch, while partially monitored, lacks a long-term plan for prevention other than RCAs;
 - b. The abundance and distribution of non-target fishes, invertebrates and plants species are not well monitored.

2. Lack of assessments:
 - a. Few stock assessments have been completed (8 of 42 nearshore species in Oregon assessed);
 - b. Few biodiversity surveys assessing spatial distribution of both target and non-target species have been conducted;
 - c. Few comprehensive maps exist for seafloor habitats.
3. Environmental variability and global warming;
4. Unknown long-term effects of pollutants;
5. Dead zones;
6. Invasive species;
7. Lack of protection for low-relief seafloor habitats.

c. Status of fisheries management:

- i. Improving due to EFH amendment and changes in Magnuson-Stevens Act;
 - ii. Improving due to recent ecosystem-based initiatives by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, including a ban on krill fisheries and formation of an Ecosystem-Based Fishery Management Subcommittee of the Scientific and Statistical Committee.
 - iii. Improving through the use of initiatives to ‘market’ sustainable fisheries using sound ecosystem-based management principles;
 - iv. In need of improvement due to:
 1. Lack of international controls or the application of ecosystem-based scientific methods and precautionary management techniques;
 2. Need for more flexibility to manage limited resources;
 3. Need for greater implementation of ecosystem-based approaches, including spatial management.
8. In Oregon’s nearshore, the Oregon Ocean Resources Management Plan and the Oregon Territorial Sea Plan, including Goal 19, direct that management should "conserve marine resources and ecological functions for the purpose of providing long-term ecological, economic, and social value and benefits to future generations."

9. Therefore, we support:
 - a. A healthy ecosystem;
 - b. Adaptive management with local flexibility, including community-based management;
 - c. The identification of important ecological areas within Oregon's coastal and marine ecosystem, the identification of threats to those areas, appropriate management measures to conserve those areas, and monitoring and evaluation of those management measures;
 - d. Use of tools which may include Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas:
 - i. To protect living marine resources and their seafloor habitats;
 - ii. To protect the genetic, age and spatial structure of species, especially long-lived species known to require older age classes to maintain reproductive capacity;
 - iii. To protect natural and cultural heritage sites and to maintain biodiversity;
 - iv. As reference areas to evaluate external management actions;
 - v. To provide relatively intact ecosystems, which are known to be more resistant and resilient to environmental variability and change.
 - e. A process for the investigation of marine reserves that includes the following:
 - i. Encourages the involvement of coastal forums or community councils. Community councils should be small in geographic scope (i.e., port by port) and diverse in representation, including the fishing industry, government agencies, environmental organizations, universities, independent scientists, other interest groups;
 - ii. Local knowledge about resource abundance and distribution, collected and consolidated using GIS technology. Data should be validated and valued for use in planning processes;
 - iii. Funding made available for councils and other legal authorities to assess and monitor actions and activities.
 - (f) An approach which includes and addresses the threats by coastal and upslope impacts to healthy marine ecosystems.

Signed by:

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