

PORT ORFORD, OREGON: A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

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Commercial fishermen in Port Orford, Oregon are partnering with community leaders, resource managers, and non-governmental organizations on an ecosystem-based management (EBM) project. The goal: a Community Stewardship Area that will protect the rich marine and coastal ecology of the region while also promoting sustainable fishing opportunities for the local fleet.

The Stewardship Area project is being led by the Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT) with support from its partners - Surfrider Foundation, Pacific Marine Conservation Council, and Ecotrust. The effort is part of the West Coast EBM Network which includes six projects from Washington, Oregon, and California, and is focused on sharing tools and information and demonstrating success.

The draft boundaries of the Stewardship Area encompass both the marine environment and adjacent watersheds, providing a geographic context for implementing ecosystem-based management (EBM). Ecosystem-based management is an integrated approach to management that considers the health of the entire ecosystem, including human uses that are dependent upon it.

For over five years, project partners have been working to formalize a bottom-up approach to management. This has included holding regular outreach and planning meetings with local fishermen. Nearly forty fleet members have formally expressed their support for the concept of a Community Stewardship Area and have collaborated to identify a set of ecological and economic goals to guide management.

Project partners have also established a Community Advisory Team to bring together different local leaders to advise planning efforts. The Advisory Team provides a formal link to the broader community and helps ensure that project efforts are transparent and consistent with the interests of other residents in Port Orford. In addition, project organizing has focused on building formal partnerships with state and federal agencies that have jurisdiction within the Stewardship Area.

To address management of the ocean portion of the Stewardship Area, project participants have evaluated area-based approaches, recognizing these can provide benefits that traditional fisheries management cannot, including protection of habitat,

biodiversity, and older female fish. Recently, the Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT) facilitated the development of a local proposal for a marine reserve as part of Oregon's statewide marine reserve planning process.

To address watershed stewardship, project leaders are strengthening partnerships with watershed councils, land trusts, and other relevant local groups. A project with the City of Port Orford is underway to assess current stormwater management and identify opportunities to protect water quality through local government action. Finally, Surfrider Foundation has established a water quality testing program in partnership with Pacific High School and POORT to advance water quality monitoring and education.

To support future management efforts, project partners are working to enhance research and monitoring within the Stewardship Area. Priorities include strengthening collaboration with agencies and universities, initiating projects to collect human use data and track indicators, and developing new opportunities for fishermen and citizens to participate. The expectation is that an enhanced collaborative science program will not only support stronger management, but also promote greater stewardship through stakeholder participation.

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