

CATCHING FISHERMEN – ENGAGING COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN OCEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

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“Fishermen in Lincoln County (Oregon) are not standing around with our arms crossed (in regards to wave energy), we are paddling and we are keeping up.” Quoted from fisherman Bob Eder in September of 2008, at the Oregon Wave Energy Trust conference. The demand for alternative energy is here and the ocean is the final frontier, with the promise of offshore wind, current, tidal and wave technologies. In reality, the ocean isn’t the final frontier; it is already highly used, highly valued, and highly demanded. Often, the space desired for wave energy development is some of the most productive crabbing grounds off of the west coast. Other potential nearshore uses such as marine reserves, oil and gas extraction, and offshore aquaculture are creating an intensely stressed fishing industry and coastal community at large. Involving the coastal community and fishing industry in the decision making process about wave energy development is critical. In Oregon, the fishing industry has relatively little organizational structure, especially for cross-sectored representation, and groups that represent both commercial and recreational fishing were, until recently, non-existent. The successful engagement of these interests involves first building the capacity, giving them the skills to engage, and making sure there is an actual path for their engagement.

This paper describes the challenges and successes of building cross-sectored fishing industry groups and engaging them in the wave energy discussion. Various community based strategies are discussed, as well as examples of how these groups are aiding in the development of wave energy research and development.