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Background Brief on ...

Marine Reserves

The Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) defines a marine reserve as “an area within Oregon's Territorial Sea or adjacent rocky intertidal area that is protected from all extractive activities, including the removal or disturbance of living and non-living marine resources, except as necessary for monitoring or research to evaluate reserve condition, effectiveness, or impact of stressors.” A marine protected area (MPA) is, in general, intended to be less restrictive than a marine reserve by allowing for certain uses that a reserve would prohibit. Marine reserves and marine protected areas have been designated around the world for different purposes including research, protection of unique habitat, rebuilding of fish stocks, and sight-seeing/recreation.

California is undergoing a multi-year process to establish a network of marine protected areas under their Marine Life Protection Act of 1999. So far, two of five coastal regions have completed the process, designating a total of 50 MPA's and marine reserves. In addition, 12 MPA's were designated around the Channel Islands in a separate process. Washington State has 31 MPAs, including nine marine reserves that are closed to all harvest and take.

History

Oregon is engaged in an ongoing process to designate marine reserves in Oregon's Territorial Sea (generally, the ocean waters up to three nautical miles from shore). In August of 2008, Governor Kulongoski issued Executive Order 08-07 which directed OPAC to recommend not more than nine sites for consideration as marine reserves before January 1, 2009. This started a community-driven process, with community groups and individuals submitting twenty marine reserve site proposals to OPAC in the summer of 2008. On November 29, 2008, OPAC sent a letter to the Governor, recommending that six distinct areas move forward for further consideration as potential sites for marine

reserves. OPAC's recommendations included two pilot marine reserve sites, three areas to be further evaluated by local community teams as potential marine reserve sites, and one area that would undergo a local collaborative process, led by the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay, to consider developing a new marine reserve proposal.

In 2009, the Oregon State Legislature passed House Bill 3013 that established a process for evaluation and implementation of marine reserves within Oregon's Territorial Sea. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), other state agencies and community teams are currently engaged in implementing the marine reserves process. ODFW, the Department of State Lands and the Department of Parks and Recreation adopted administrative rules in December 2009 and January 2010 to designate the two pilot sites. ODFW is working with community teams, Oregon State Police, and other relevant state agencies to write management plans for the Pilot Marine Reserve Sites that include site specific goals, biological and social/economic monitoring plans, outreach and education strategies, and compliance and enforcement plans. ODFW is also working with community teams at the evaluation areas to refine and make final site recommendations. These processes include opportunities for public review and input, and a report on the progress of the work will be delivered to the Legislature by November 30, 2010.

Pilot Marine Reserve Sites

The two proposals that OPAC recommended be established as pilot projects were Otter Rock and Redfish Rocks. OPAC chose these proposals because they were the most developed in terms of community collaboration and baseline information. The pilot sites will provide a framework for scientific research and from which effectiveness as a management tool can be determined.

Otter Rock Pilot Marine Reserve - The reserve is located in Lincoln County between the cities of Newport and Depoe Bay, and encompasses approximately 1.3 square miles of nearshore

waters. The Otter Rock Marine Reserve is composed of dynamic rocky reef, sandy bottom habitats and several wash rocks and islands. The site has two Pinniped haul-outs and nine sea bird colony nesting sites. While the site is not often used for commercial or recreational fishing, some recreational fishing and crabbing does take place inside and near the boundaries of the reserve. The Otter Rock Marine Reserve will conserve local biodiversity and protect the unique habitats that the reserves boundaries encompass.

The Depoe Bay Near Shore Action Team (NSAT), appointed by the Depoe Bay City Council, proposed the Otter Rock site because it met the goals of an ecologically significant area that avoided a significant adverse social and economic impact on ocean users and nearby coastal communities. Currently, NSAT members are working with staff from ODFW to develop management and monitoring plans for the site. ODFW and collaborators will begin collecting baseline data at the site in summer 2010.

Redfish Rocks Pilot Marine Reserve - The Redfish Rocks marine reserve includes an adjacent MPA. The site is located south of Port Orford, in Curry County, and the marine reserve portion encompasses approximately 2.6 square miles of nearshore waters. The site is composed of dynamic rocky reef, four large emergent rocks and sandy sea-floor. Several important nearshore groundfish species mainly caught in the live fish fishery are abundant at this site. Historically, the site has been moderately used by the commercial limited entry nearshore fishery and for some extraction of abalone, urchin, and recreational groundfish. The associated MPA, which extends westward toward the territorial sea boundary, covers approximately 5.8 additional square miles. The MPA allows for crabbing and salmon trolling, in order to reduce the economic impact to the fishing fleet while still providing for an ecologically significant site. The fishery allowances provide for extended protection of bottom-dwelling fish species in the MPA, especially those that live in deeper water than the reserve or migrate to deeper water as part of their life history, while helping to lessen

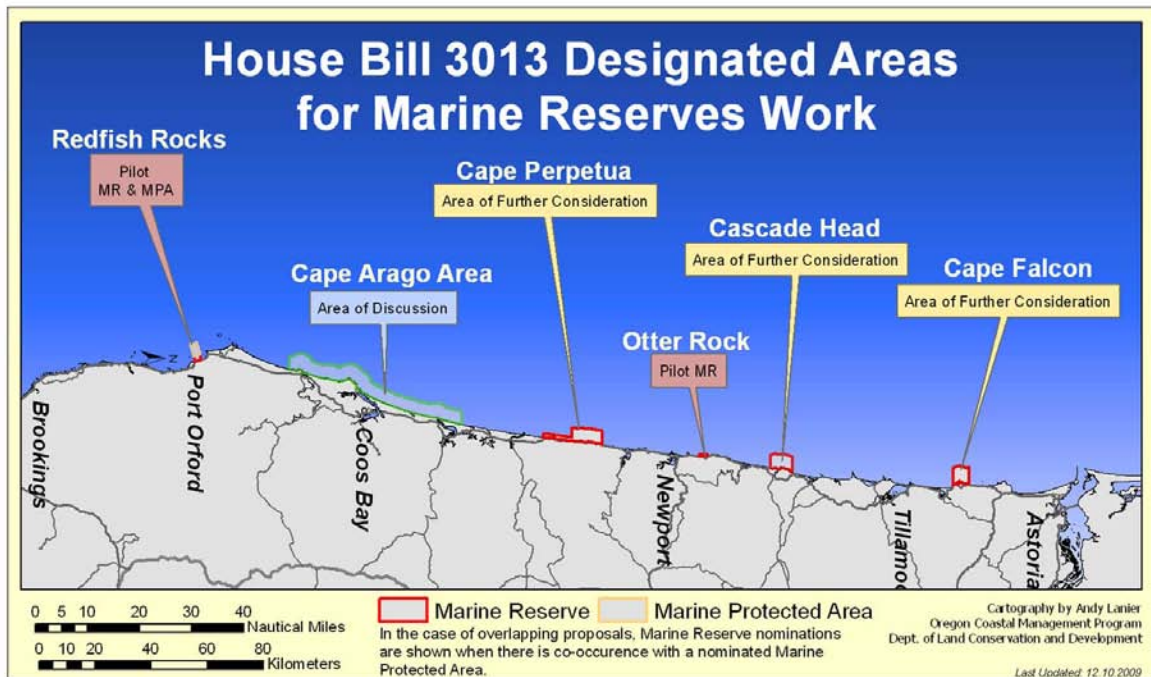
potential economic and social losses to ocean users and ocean-dependent communities. Redfish Rocks Marine Reserve and Marine Protected Area will protect and conserve local (on site) biodiversity in order to have an example site of an area not influenced by extractive use.

OPAC recommended that the interested parties in the Cape Arago/Seven Devils area, led by the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay, be encouraged and supported to engage in further collaboration to develop a marine reserve proposal.

The Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT), a community-initiated nonprofit organization based in Port Orford, proposed the Redfish Rocks site to OPAC during the 2008 proposal process. The recently-formed Redfish Rocks Community Team is working with POORT and staff from ODFW to develop management and monitoring plans for the site. ODFW and collaborators will begin collecting baseline data at the site in summer 2010.

Areas for Further Study

Following the requirements of House Bill 3013 (2009), community teams comprised of diverse and balanced stakeholder representatives have been formed to further evaluate proposed marine reserve sites at Cape Falcon which straddles the Clatsop and Tillamook County lines along Oregon's northern coast; Cascade Head which is north of Lincoln City and straddles the Tillamook and Lincoln County lines; and Cape Perpetua which straddles the Lincoln and Lane County lines between the cities of Florence and Newport. The purpose of these community teams is to refine and make final recommendations regarding the sites to ODFW by October 2010. The three community teams have been meeting since January 2010 to gather and consider the ecological, social, and economic attributes of the sites. ODFW scientists and the community teams are working in coordination to examine the general ecology and oceanography of the proposed sites. This information will give a better picture of who, what, where, why, when, and how the site is used. Information will also be gathered on the economic and social aspects of the sites from both consumptive and non-consumptive users. This information will be a key part of the decision process and help the teams reach a consensus.



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*The Department of Fish and Wildlife assisted
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