



# **LONG FORM FISHING COMMUNITY PROFILE**

## **Port Orford, Oregon**

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### **Long Form Fishing Community Profile**

This profile was created as a result of a collaborative research project conducted during 2007. The project was designed and implemented with the help of the commercial fishing community working in partnership with scientists from Oregon State University (OSU) and Oregon Sea Grant.

The idea for this collaborative project originated in Port Orford, Oregon. The project took an innovative approach and involved members of the fishing community interviewing their own peers, providing a depth of information not frequently available to scientists. The data gathered was intended to supplement NOAA Fisheries “short form” community profiles (see: [http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/assets/25/6718\\_01082008\\_153910\\_CommunityProfilesTM85WebFinalSA.pdf](http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/assets/25/6718_01082008_153910_CommunityProfilesTM85WebFinalSA.pdf)). This “long form profile” contains information not included in NOAA profiles. The intention was to provide information that would help fisheries managers, decision makers, fishing community members, and the public to better understand the community of Port Orford and the potential impacts of ocean-related policies on the fishing community there.

Leesa Cobb of the Port Orford Ocean Resources Team, and Bryan Tilt and Flaxen Conway of OSU, were the co-principal investigators to the project. Christina Package was the Graduate Research Assistant and she conducted 2 of the 18 interviews. This collaborative research project was the foundation of her thesis for a Masters of Arts degree in Applied Anthropology at OSU. Valerie Mecum served as the Community Researcher; she conducted 16 of the 18 interviews and helped with the design and outreach of the project. Each interview lasted between 30-90 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Although we couldn’t interview everyone, we tried to make sure that all groups were represented: all fisheries (crab, salmon, groundfish, etc.), owners of vessels and crewmembers, full-time commercial fishermen (fishermen deriving their full income from fishing), retired commercial fishermen, fishermen’s wife/partner, Port manager/workers, charter fisherman, shoreside business workers (processors, fuel/dock workers, filleters, marine suppliers, etc.), those who had spent various lengths of time in community, various levels of production, income, ages, and gender.

There are eight sections to this profile:

- Importance of Fishing to the Community of Place
- Characteristics of Fishing Community Members and their Families
- Boundaries: Connection between the Fishing Community and the Community of Place
- Communication within the Fishing Community and between the Fishing Community and Others
- Perspectives on Management and Effects of Management
- Change in Fishing and Seafood: Economics and Fishing Effort
- Perceptions of the State of the Ocean and its Resources
- Perceptions of the Future

Each section of this profile contains a **summary** of perspectives and information provided from the interviews conducted in Port Orford. Where indicated with quotations, we have included verbatim comments from transcribed interviews to add depth and color.

The authors would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our partners, and Karma Norman and the NOAA Fisheries Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Oregon Sea Grant, and Oregon State University Sustainable Rural Communities Initiative for funding this important work. Most importantly, the authors would like to thank those members of the fishing community who shared their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives with us.

## **Importance of Fishing to the Community of Place**

Although the demographics of the community have been changing in recent years, fishing is very important and has a long history in the community of Port Orford.

*“Port Orford IS fishing.”*

One resident summed up this sentiment by saying, “If you’re going to live in Port Orford, there isn’t a whole lot else to do here. So you’re going to be attracted to the area for all the things it is or isn’t, and this is what Port Orford is, and that’s what you do if you live here.”

Fishing is the major employer in the area. It provides steady employment and an economic benefit to the community. Fishing provides about 25% of the jobs in Port Orford and actively employs approximately 120 community members. Tourism draws people to the community, but fishing is what draws the tourists. This “translates into actual supermarket dollars, hardware stores” and other support services that are available and supported because of the revenue coming in. Whereas, “logging and other industries here wax and wane...fishing business is really steady.” However, some believe that as fishing regulations change, the possibility of being involved in fishing is decreasing.

Still, in Port Orford, fishing creates a cohesive community by creating a common life. Since a good portion of the community is dependent on fishing, if there are bad or good years the residents are all in a similar situation.

## **Characteristics of Fishing Community Members and their Families**

Fishermen in the community of Port Orford have a love for their work and way

of life: “They eat, sleep, and breathe fishing; they love it.” They’re attached to their livelihood and to fishing in general, frequently indicating that they don’t want to engage in any other occupation. The fishing lifestyle provides a certain desired freedom.

Fishermen in Port Orford are “a bunch of independent people who want to run their own business, trying to make a bit of money at it.” This independent nature might impact the following of fishing regulations. “When you bring in these regulations and you tell them they can only catch this many fish, that is the hardest thing for them to do, is to quit fishing...so they spend all day trying to figure out how to get around that.”

Fishermen in Port Orford are mostly males; some women are or were active fishermen. Although some community members said that younger guys are getting involved, most notes that skippers tend to be older as it’s becoming more difficult for young people to get involved and own boats. “Unless they’re inheriting it, they can’t get in” because of such obstacles as the high cost of permits.

Whereas many boat owners have families, most crewmembers are single. Some crewmembers have been crew for quite a while and are dependable, others are younger men who are just starting out, transient and move from boat to boat.

There is “a big turnover in deck hands” and people complain that they can’t find anyone to go out fishing with them on some days. Some crewmembers try out fishing and decide that it’s not for them or switch boats. They are “here tomorrow and gone the next day.” Some said that the high-turnover rate in crew might be because of the shortened fishing seasons, difficulty in having a constant job or a job guaranteed in a few months. Crew members for the crab fishery must work on preparing the gear beforehand without pay, hoping that they’ll make up for it when the crabbing season

begins. This could be difficult for a new crewmember.

There are varying work ethics among those fishing in Port Orford depending on whether or not one is monetarily dependent on fishing. Some fishermen are more serious about catching fish, others have moved into the area as semi-retired and fish perhaps not so seriously (hobby fishermen).

Port Orford's port is unique along the Oregon coast in that there is no protected harbor. A crane on the dock lifts the boats in and out of the water daily. The vessels are smaller in size (40 foot vessel length limitation). Port Orford fishermen are "used to coming home every night. The hard, grinding fishermen up and down the coast on bigger boats are out 5, 7, 10 days at a time, when we're normally in every day. We're in and out and in and out. We're day fishermen. That is probably the primary difference between our styles of fishing."

Port Orford fishermen also lack a Coast Guard facility and are always there to help each other when they are in need and have an emergency situation. "There's no hesitation. That's just the way of life."

Port Orford fishermen understand that they must be diversified in order to stay in fishing. This means being involved in multiple types of fishing, being able to understand changing regulations, coping with irregular income and regular expenses, and having a "diversification of skills; being a mechanic, a painter, an electrician, welder." A lot of the school teachers used to be involved in salmon fishing and it used to be common in the late 1970s and early 1980s for fishermen to be loggers in the off-season.

### Fishing Families

All members of a boat owner's fishing family in Port Orford are involved in the family business. "I think the mind set of a fishing family is when you do have time, you're helping." It was common in the past

that children were actively involved in helping the family fishing operation in whatever capacity; helping with gear or just checking in with your father when he returned from fishing to see what needs to be done. "A lot of times the kids would be working in the gear sheds, learning from hands-on experience how the gear worked and building it, so they were helping out. Of course as soon as they were teenagers and needed that money, they were right out there figuring out what their percentage was."

Today "very few families bring the children into [fishing]" because they want their children to avoid having the same struggles and to do other things because fishing has become so difficult. Children are encouraged to go to college.

Part of being a fishing wife in the past meant that you had time to devote to your children and community because you didn't necessarily have to work outside of the home. Spouses "were able to come together as fishing wives and raise the toddlers."

Wives still play an important role in the family business. They are commonly the bookkeepers of the fishing operation. When the fishermen are actively fishing for long periods of time, the wives keep the operations of the house going.

Today it is more necessary for the spouse to hold an outside job.

*"The old saying is, behind every successful fisherman is a wife with a full-time job."*

Because of the unpredictable nature of fishing, spouses with another job can provide health insurance and income for the family in low periods of fishing. This allows the fishermen to be more successful because they have the ability to devote more money to the purchasing of gear, therefore leading to more opportunity rather than having to solely support the family.

However, Port Orford has had a limited amount of non-fishing related businesses and, therefore, does not have as many opportunities for the spouse to work as in other communities. “We don’t have a lot of other industries [that] I am sure they do in other fishing towns.”

### Changes over Time

The top response when asked how fishing families have changed in the last ten years was that there is much less security and stability now. “They don’t know what next year brings” so they’re reluctant to make big decisions like building a new house. It used to be that a fisherman had options and if one fishery was down you could switch your effort into another fishery.

There’s less security for crewmembers and their families as well. Crew used to be able to remain on the same boat for years at a time. Now, with the shortened seasons (crab, salmon), there’s no such job security for crewmembers.

The shortening/changing of the salmon fishing season has affected families of teachers that used to be involved in salmon fishing (because they had the summers off). Since the season was changed and the beginning date to start fishing is much more variable, and the fishing times are different for each individual fishery, they are not able to remain involved in it. These fishermen would “take their whole family and go fishing. And that’s completely gone.”

There were mixed perspectives on how fishing families have changed. Some felt that fishing families are the same as they were ten years ago, and that the same people that were involved in fishing are still involved in fishing (with the addition of a few new fishermen). Because these are the same individuals, in many cases their children are now grown.

Conversely, it was said that there has been a big turnover in who is involved in

fishing in the last ten years and that the families are younger. One person explained that they were home more now because the fishery is no longer a derby fishery; in the past they were gone and “didn’t get to see my kids grow up much.”

The minority opinion was that there hasn’t been that much of a change in fishing families in the last ten years. However, these folks believed there has been a large change in fishing families in the last thirty years.

*“They don’t know what the next year brings.”*

### **Boundaries: Connection between the Fishing Community and the Community of Place**

Table 1 below lists services available in Port Orford and elsewhere. Local fishermen are dependent on neighboring communities (Coos Bay or Charleston) or larger communities (Newport) for some boat repair services and also for the purchasing of commercial gear. Fish processing/live fish selling is also tied to other communities, with satellite buying stations being located in Port Orford.

The remaining other support services necessary for fishing are located within the community of place of Port Orford. Fuel and ice are available within the community and some book-keeping and legal services are available. Port Orford has a local, active fishermen’s wives organization, a marketing association, as well as local schools and churches that understand and support fishing. The local organization of POORT (Port Orford Ocean Resource Team) plays a major role in aiding in understanding and providing information on fishing regulations to local fishermen.

**Table 1: Services and Where Available**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Community Where Available</b>
Gear	Recreational gear used primarily for sportfishing is available in Port Orford. For commercial gear one travels outside the community. At one time commercial gear was available locally, but not anymore.
Fuel	The Port of Port Orford supplies fuel.
Ice	The Port of Port Orford has ice, but fishermen also purchase it from the processor (Hallmark) buying station in town.
Boat Repair	Done by the fishermen themselves because the boats taken out of water every day. There are mobile mechanics from other communities. There are electricians and radio repair men in Coos Bay. Need to go to Charleston to find parts and electronics. There's a local individual who occasionally does some repair on electronics. There's a local person who does some welding and fabrication. There's no local engine repair.
Processors	No fish processors are located in Port Orford - everything is shipped out to be processed. There are two satellite buying stations: Hallmark (processes Port Orford fish at their Charleston plant) and Nor-Cal (buys live fish), and a public hoist for fishermen and transient buyers to use. There used to be a company that processed crab, fish, and salmon in Port Orford (Blanco Fisheries) but that closed 1984 or 1985.
Bookkeeping	Have bookkeeping services in Port Orford (one bookkeeper and one CPA); however some people go outside the community for this service.
Legal Services	Some lawyers in town; no one with specific knowledge of maritime law and fishing industry rules/regulations. POORT provides information to fishermen or guidance on where to acquire such knowledge.
Social Contacts	Churches, schools, fishermen's wives organization, a strong marketing association, etc. exist in the community of Port Orford. Fishermen are not as actively involved socially in the community as they work long and irregular hours; however their families are involved in social activities.

**Fishing Community Communication**

Communication within the fishing community

Communication among fishermen in Port Orford is conducted for the most part at the local coffee shop/restaurant or on the dock. "It's a small enough place where you run into just about everybody you know every day, and that's how I get most of my information. Just the other day there was a one-day salmon closure and I had no idea. I might have even gone out that day. And it was a good thing I ran into somebody the day before to let me know that we weren't fishing the next day." However, this type of

informal communication can also be "kind of dicey because it quite often is wrong" and can spread rumors and incorrect information. At sea, if issues arise, information is communicated over the VHF radio or, these days, cell phones are more widely used because they provide more privacy than radio.

Fishermen have depended on informal communication to help to discern the meanings of fishery rules. In the recent history of fishing (after the 70s), "it became increasingly complex to even understand when the seasons were, or what gear you could use, it was just very easy to get confused. You had to have a Loran that

interfaced with the ODF&W (Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife) computer, you'd turn around and you actually were still dependent on informal because you'd be talking to somebody and they'd be going no, no, no, I read the regulation differently. And you get out the 1" thick book and try to figure out what you were allowed to do." Today many find answers to questions on the meanings of rules/regulations via the Internet as it makes information more accessible. It is important to remember, however, that some fishermen don't have access to the Internet or aren't familiar with using computers.

The Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT), a non-profit organization, was created by a fishing community member for the purpose of communicating fisheries information to the fishing community. Using only word of mouth, information can get skewed as it's passed from one person to the next. POORT "has been instrumental in improving those lines of communication with the fishermen." POORT helps fishermen access information by connecting them with fisheries managers over the telephone or via the computer. It has hosted observer program meetings (when the observer program was first started), Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) informational meetings, marine reserve informational meetings, ODF&W meetings, and is "a hub to connect folks."

#### Communication with other organizations

Some members of Port Orford fishing fleet are involved in the Fishermen's Marketing Association which "has meetings as needed for a season, such as [for] crab marketing." The Association also helps ODF&W conduct tests for the crab season. Representatives from the Association attend tri-state information meetings (OR, CA, WA) regarding crab regulations usually once a year.

Some appointed Port Orford crab fishermen are involved in conference calls with other West Coast crab fishermen each year. It is a pretty effective way to "get all those people together from up and down the coast and tell them everybody has to be at this spot at this time."

Fishing community members also communicate with non-profits such as Surfrider Foundation and Ecotrust, who "manage to communicate with the outside world."

#### Communication with fisheries managers

Members of the Port Orford fishing community are frustrated with communication via attending Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) meetings because they are typically held far away from Port Orford (in locations such as Seattle and San Diego). Fishermen are busy and "don't really have the time to sit." Decisions are made at these far-away meetings and, as one fisherman remarked, "we still feel we're being isolated because the final decision making process is far out of my reach, and we feel disenfranchised." Some commented that the PFMC meetings are simply held to fulfill a public hearing requirement.

In addition, the information sent out by fisheries managers in PFMC or ODF&W is sometimes unclear and hard to read. Some feel that POORT has helped with this; informing folks of upcoming meetings. Others still rely on informal communication with other fishermen.

*"POORT has been instrumental in improving lines of communication with fishermen. "*

### Communication with Coast Guard

Community members spoke of their good relationship with the Coast Guard. “The Coast Guard conducts safety inspections for all vessels that wish to have them or anybody who has federal observer coverage. It’s mandatory to have examinations so that the vessel is safe for groundfish observers and other observers. Even though we don’t have an active Coast Guard entity in Port Orford, we’re closely associated with the groups from Brookings and Coos Bay, and the outreach programs for Gold Beach and Bandon are closer with rescue vessels in the summertime.” Coast Guard helicopter rescue service comes out of North Bend. The Coast Guard also flies over the fishing grounds for enforcement. “There’s definitely a Coast Guard presence in our area, we deal with them all the time.”

The Coast Guard conducts safety examinations of the fishing vessels on the ocean during fishing trips. Although the boardings are a good thing, they are “a pain... sometimes because it takes up a lot of your time when they get on your boat” because they need to make sure that all of one’s papers are up to date.”

### **Perspectives on, and the Effects of, Management**

Overall comments conveyed the feeling that frequently the number of fish out there is greater than what has been determined by the stock assessments. This impacts willingness or ability to participate in fishing.

Young fishermen especially find it hard to enter into the industry with current fisheries management: limited entry and the high cost of permits. “There was no feasible way for him to get in with the cost, and there was no feasible way for him to make a living once he did get in, even if he didn’t go into debt. Imagine, then, going into debt

for some of these permits and then the rug gets pulled out from under you on a decision.” Several specific management topics were brought up in interviews.

### Salmon disasters

There have been two official salmon disasters declared in the past (2006 and mid 1990s). 2008 was considered an extension of the 2006 disaster for salmon fishermen, with disaster relief aid delivered then as well.

Salmon disasters have been declared during years of complete closure for salmon fishing. Here the amount of the weakest stock along the coast dictates whether or not fishing for all stocks of salmon is closed. Even if the numbers for a particular run of salmon are good (such as the Sacramento stock in 2006), “just because there were a few Klamath fish mixed in with them... we couldn’t access the resource” because all salmon fishing had been closed.

These closures significantly impact those who depend on salmon for their living and cause them to scramble to make ends meet.

*“Management decisions for salmon disaster changed our whole community from being a salmon port to a ‘whatever-we-could-find-to-do’ port.”*

In the most recent salmon disaster, the relief was administered based partly on recent landing records, and “a lot of the most desperate fishermen had some of the lowest landing records, therefore they qualified for a smaller check. There’s a lot of people who got the minimum amount of \$200 or something [and] they were the people who probably needed it the most.” There were a lot of hard feelings about the way in which the money was distributed; with some people receiving what people felt

was not their fair share. Other ways have been tried in the past. During some bad salmon years, floating interest loans were provided to fishermen. After many bad years of salmon fishing and not being able to pay off any of the principle amount of the loan, “most of the guys who had those loans lost their boats.”

### Groundfish buyback

The groundfish buyback was conducted in 2003 and was intended to limit the number of boats involved in groundfish fishing by purchasing boats and permits from their owners. The groundfish buyback only included trawl boats; therefore no vessels from Port Orford were included in the buyback because they do not trawl.

The intention of the buyback -- to reduce the trawl fleet -- was perceived as good. “The buyback of the draggers was a fantastic thing, from a small port and a small boat perspective. In one tow they will catch more fish than this entire port catches in a whole year. And then they go back tomorrow.” However, since those which were bought out had a lot of capital because they had just sold their boat, they were able to purchase new boats and become involved in other fisheries, such as switching to crab which was not good. They bought crab traps and “brought them all down here on their new boats” which hurt Port Orford crab fishermen.

There were other misunderstandings or unintended consequences. For example, people didn’t initially understand that the money which was used by the government for the buyback program would be funded by other fishermen. The trawl buyback included purchasing all permits with the vessel. The subsequent purchase of Oregon Dungeness crab permits required the crab industry to pay for those permits by paying a tax on crab. “I did not know that when the government did that buyback, that the

fishermen were going to have to pay that back. I did not know that. I was shocked when I learned.” It had been promised that after the buyback the allowable amount of catch would be increased, but this was not done.

### Crab pot limits

POORT was involved in establishing the recent state crab pot limit program which limits the number of pots that each vessel can fish. Port Orford fishermen had been impacted by larger vessels with a large number of pots fishing their local grounds.

*Crab pot limits “makes it fairer for us, just through that experience that one year a bazillion pots just arrived here, they laid gear right at our dock and we couldn’t even get out of our harbor with the floating rope and boats from everywhere... And this [crab pot limits] has helped us, this year was the first year we have seen this, the impact of this year and there was a lot less effort down here.”*

### Black cod permit stacking

Black cod historically was a derby fishery. A permit system was implemented by management, with permits issued based on the historical catch of those involved in the fishery. Today, each vessel is allowed a certain number of pounds which can be caught in approximately six months, but vessels “stack” permits (multiple permits on one vessel) in order to be able to catch more per vessel. This can be done by leasing or purchasing the permits. There are a few vessels in Port Orford that stack black cod

permits. Some informants felt that permit stacking is a way for the richer fishermen to have access to more of the resource, which in their opinion has become common in fishing where “one group is stuck on small limits and the other minority group that acted first is taking the lion’s share, and it’s totally out of proportion.”

### **Change in Fishing and Seafood: Economics and Fishing Effort**

In the late 1960s more people had become involved in salmon fishing: “boats were being built, no regulations, [and] masses of people got into the business.” When asked about the economic changes that they’ve seen in Port Orford related to fishing and seafood, the first salmon regulations in 1979 was indicated as a common starting point for the economic changes witnessed in the community. At that time Port Orford was a salmon port. In a good week or two good weeks of salmon fishing, one could afford to buy a new house.

As one person explained, “1979 was the first time I heard people talking on the radio about closures. We’re going to have some closures, one week closure in the salmon fishery. At that time the fleet would be pretty spread out. The whole coast was open, so there were huge areas to fish, and you could find a spot where everybody wasn’t all packed together... And you had a lot of subsidiary industries in the towns that were based on that. The fish handlers, the buyers, the packers, the truck drivers, ice plant operators... a fairly extensive community that depended on that. Once they started having these closures in the 80s, everything just started folding slowly up, because they didn’t have enough of a season to support those land-based operations.”

Regulations were developed in the 1980s. Fisheries managers limited entry into

the fishery, developed the Klamath River Zone, and established closures. This affected both the fishermen and also the support services in the community which depended on salmon revenue (such as the gear stores). The fleet went from about 80 vessels, down to only 8 vessels involved in salmon fishing. By the 1990s fishermen in Port Orford had diversified and spread to other fisheries as well as salmon. In order to make it through. “I will always have my favorite fishery, but I have a plan B and plan C.”

Cycles within fisheries have also brought change. There was an urchin fishing boom in the late 1980s-early 1990s in Port Orford. This brought some revenue into the community. However the urchin processing plant owner was from another state and imported his own labor into the community, so there were very few people from the community who were involved in the fishery. That fishery soon crashed. Other fisheries are said to be cyclical as well, with certain years being better in terms of catch and thus the amount of money that can be made

Other issues that affect the economics and effort include fuel costs, which continue to rise. However, the price received for different types of fish can be very similar to prices received a long time ago. Shoaling (because of the inability to access the water), decreased competition for product from fish processors, and the creation of the rockfish conservation areas (RCA) and changes in rockfish regulations all impact community members’ incomes.

*“I used to make \$20-30,000 a year Portugueseing rockfish, especially golden eye, canaries, yellowtail, blue rock, black rockfish, and brownies. All those would supplement me during the bad salmon years in the 90s... we were able to get by.”*

Another issue is the need to hold onto their salmon market, even when there's a salmon crisis, in order to be able to keep involved in salmon fishing. It takes time to get that market back after bad years, such as the Klamath crisis when they were not able to fish. The 1990s were bad years for salmon prices because "that's where the Chilean farm fish really got their foothold." Today the price has gone back up but there was no salmon season in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

The economic situation has improved because of value added. The live fish fishery has brought the price of rockfish up, "where before they were only getting \$0.25 and now they're doubling it, as long as they keep them alive, if not 10 times more."

Today fishermen spend less time on the water. Changes in fishing effort in Port Orford followed the same trends in economics described above. Prior to the 1980s there was open access. Many vessels in Port Orford had become involved in salmon fishing prior to the development of regulations. Fishermen used to travel up and down the coast for various beginnings of different salmon fisheries in different areas. There used to be fewer people involved in crab fishing, but with the development of regulations in salmon, more people in Port Orford became involved in crabbing. Fishermen in Port Orford entered into other fisheries (such as black cod and groundfish) and increased the effort there, but as regulations developed for those fisheries (and the fisheries switched from open access to limited entry/derby fisheries and to more regulated fisheries) the number of days for fishing, total catch, and number of pots, etc. became more limited.

*"Crab... is still kind of a derby; it is an opening day and most crab are caught in the first two weeks."*

## **Perceptions of the State of the Ocean and its Resources**

### Overall health of the ocean near Port Orford

Generally the perception is that the overall health of the ocean in the area is very good, especially compared to other areas. On the West Coast "the Port Orford area is #1 in recovery and fish health." This area has always been "fairly plentiful" because of the structure of the bottom of the ocean and the upwelling, the area's remoteness, and because of the small boat fleet which "can only carry so much." The community's reliance on small craft (and lack of draggers with high volume fisheries) has allowed it to self-regulate the amount harvested and keep a healthy system that has not changed or declined over time. "They [fisheries managers] think that we're over-fishing. But I don't think we are. I think we're doing pretty good at managing our own product here."

Conversely, some informants said that the fisheries probably are not as healthy today as they once were. The advances in gear and electronics were mentioned as a cause of the decline of certain fisheries, especially groundfish. Others mentioned that the fisheries around Port Orford have recovered since the larger boats stop coming into the area as much. Others mentioned that fisheries rules and regulations for commercial and recreational fishing have helped to ensure that the health of the fisheries is good today.

The perceptions of people have changed; in the past people wanted to catch everything, but today they want to maintain a balance as far as catching and preserving the resource.

When explaining that he had caught a 100 year-old yelloweye rockfish and turned it loose (after venting it so that it could survive), one fisherman said: "10 years ago people would have been upset about that, but now they realize that you just can't kill

everything you catch and catch as many as you want, and there's some balance to that... Certainly techniques in regard to dealing with those kinds of fish, so that when you do turn them loose, they swim back to the bottom and have a good chance of living."

#### Cyclical ocean and fisheries systems

The ocean follows cycles, and thus the fisheries are cyclical with booms and busts. "It's all cyclical... it's just like, the kelp comes, then there will be more kelp one year and the next year there will be less."

Albacore tuna is cyclical, with an estimated four year cycle of highs and lows. Crab follows a seven year cycle. The weather affects these cycles with the highs/lows of various species peaking when a specific weather cycle happens, "but if you recognize those cycles, you can gear your life around them, kind of like a farmer does." These are natural cycles dictated by the ocean, rather than by overfishing.

As for fisheries that have been impacted by harvest, some feel that these should be monitored and opened when recovery has happened. For example, areas that are now closed to rockfish fishing (the Rockfish Conservation Area) should not be closed indefinitely and should be opened back up for fishing. Rockfish are doing well and have rebounded, with the stocks of canary and yelloweye needing to be reassessed by fisheries biologists. "The big yelloweye rockfish and the canary rockfish, they're abundant, very abundant here. I could literally go out there and sink my boat with them."

*"We need to get proper funding to do the proper science and fish stock studies, and not just once every five or 20 years; on a yearly basis."*

The black cod fishery was recently reduced because of one weak year class, but this fish lives to be 30-35 years old and can spawn at three years old; therefore it doesn't make sense that because of one weak link, that the fishery was reduced. Black cod are fast-growing, robust and have been dominating. Salmon are cyclical as far as good and bad seasons. The salmon stock is dependent upon various other factors including the diversion of river water for agriculture (and resulting fish mortality from low water conditions), dams, and release of hatchery fish by ODF&W.

#### Coastal development impacts

There are worries that building more golf courses in the area will further impact fish populations because of the use of fertilizer and herbicides. More and more development is happening on the coast and on the rivers of the area "which is going to really hugely impact what happens to all of these [fish] populations."

#### Weather impacts such as El Nino

The first El Nino in the 1980s, a lot of people sold their salmon permits (because they couldn't afford to keep the permit renewed) and a lot of larger boats bought up those permits. Every year the media says that it might be an El Nino year makes people scared because of the extreme impact on fisheries. Fisheries managers should give the public warning if it is actually going to occur. The El Nino of 1983 extremely impacted the fisheries that year. "In 1983 it was like night and day from the year before. Then you could see it in 1984, the ocean starting to bloom again, and by 1986 fishing salmon, you started running into bonus years." For three years the salmon fishing was unprecedented.

## Perceptions of the Future

### Imagined future

When participants were asked what they *imagine the fishing community of Port Orford will be like in five years*, it was commonly expressed dredging will have a large impact on what the future looks like. In order for the fishermen to have predictable and safe access to the water it is necessary to dredge each year, but Congress (funding work by the Army Corps of Engineers) has provided very limited annual funding for the community. This lack of dredging impacts the ability of Port Orford's fishing vessels to access the water. Port Orford was clam shell dredged while the interviews for this project were being conducted, but before that the community had only limited maintenance dredging.

Not being able to get out to fish in a timely manner or get out to fish at all, affects the money that fishermen are able to make, even if there is a good season (such as a few of the recent good crab seasons where the fishermen were not able to get out to fish). "Well, when you have to get to the dock and put your boat in at 2:30am just because you want to get the tide and need the tide depth to be able to put your boat in, and then you can't really run your boat or run your gear or operate your boat until 6am, it's what I would say is not a 'timely manner.' So you end up again forcing yourself to do things that are not in the best interest of safety and or operating your business from a pure and simple business economic standpoint, just so you can get your boat in or out of the water."

The shoaling/dredging problem also affects the safety of fishermen because one is not able to maintain their boat. Fishermen "can't go a long time between those high times where you can redo your boat, redo your motor." When there are too many years in a row where one does not make a large amount of money (peak money), then it's

difficult to be able to afford to maintain your vessel. Another issue is that the jetty length is not long enough to block the sand from re-entering and washing back onto the beach. Both issues of dredging and the jetty could impact the ability of people to stay involved in fishing in the future.

Gentrification will impact what the community is like in the future. The construction of golf courses nearby is currently being considered as likely to change the demographics of who lives in the area. The influx of more wealthy people could create a large gap between the working class and non-working/retiree class. The community might become unaffordable for those that earn a working wage. A few people mentioned that the nearby community of Bandon has changed substantially in recent years with higher rent prices and very little fishing. People are concerned that Port Orford could become similar to Bandon.

*"The influx of the hyper-rich is really impacting these coastal communities. And when that happens, it really displaces the people who are just working at a living wage around here."*

There were mixed perspectives on how the influx of wealthier people could possibly impact Port Orford. Some felt that it could have a positive effect on the dredging issue because if wealthy people want their pleasure crafts, then they might fund to dredge. Some felt there might be increased tourism and sport fishing interest in Port Orford in the future, with a concern that this could result in "less effort...to assist commercial fishermen." Other fears about the dependence on tourism creating a

situation where one has commute to go to work because there are limited opportunities in your own community.

Fewer young people getting involved in fishing was also explained as something that might affect the future of fishing in the community. The fishing population is aging and many people are concerned about what this might mean for the future of fishing in Port Orford. One hypothesis was that this might mean that fishing would turn industrial, with big corporations owning the vessels. Another was that the fishermen should take on apprentices in order to get more young people to become involved in fishing.

#### Desired future

When asked to describe what they would like the future of the fishing community of Port Orford to look like, there were a variety of answers. Some people said that that would like to see Port Orford remain the same as it is now, but with a safe harbor. A majority of the people mentioned they would like to see fixing the dredging/deep water harbor and jetty problems.

*“Keep it safe so (they) can continue to do what they want to do here, which is fishing. That is Port Orford.”*

Others mentioned that they would like to maintain the community as a working commercial fishing town, instead of turning into a sport harbor as the neighboring communities of Gold Beach and Bandon.

The creation of an exclusionary area (stewardship zone) around Port Orford to limit outsider involvement was also mentioned. Port Orford was described as an already self-regulating area because of the weather and the inability to get out to fish,

the proximity to other ports, and the low impact from the local fleet. However, larger boats from outside the area such as Newport, Oregon; Washington; and California, were said to be able to come in and take the local crab because “they can fish around the clock” with their large boats that can take any weather. Creating an exclusionary area would limit the larger boats’ involvement and provide local control. Limiting the size of the vessels that could be allowed to fish in the area to mid-sized and smaller boats and then it would be likely that people could continue to make a reasonable living. The “resource close to the community should be controlled by the community.” One person mentioned that they would like to see the Rockfish Conservation Area meld into the stewardship area, and would like to have zero bycatch, which they think could be accomplished using the local stewardship area model.

Others shared that they would like to see more fish buyers and processors in the community to create some more competition; to get rid of the processor monopoly structure. “First of all, we’ve got to get rid of the old boy school. That if you sell down the street, you’re done. The isolated, one-buyer market problem.” Others shared that they would like to see a plant or cannery in the community, a processor either owned privately or one owned by the community where fishermen could process their own product. This would add value to the product and keep the revenue in the community. Conversely, it was shared that this is a big commitment and involves more than just processing; marketing. If there was a private processor/cannery, it wouldn’t be able to exist because there isn’t the amount of poundage being delivered to support another facility because large boats don’t deliver here.