



# **LONG FORM FISHING COMMUNITY PROFILE**

## **Newport, 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 Newport 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 15 of the 32 interviews. This collaborative research project was the foundation of her thesis for a Masters of Arts degree in Applied Anthropology at OSU. Michelle Cottrell served as the Community Researcher; she conducted 17 of the 32 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 Newport. 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**

Commercial fishing is very important to Newport. It has one of the largest commercial fleets on the coast and is comprised of a local fleet as well as a distant water fleet that fishes in Alaska. "Fishing is this community. If fishing doesn't exist, there is no Newport." Fishing is one of the top industries in the community (along with tourism and logging) and is called "the backbone" of the community and "responsible for most of what Newport is and does." "Newport (I think) was #11 in the US for fish production and for landings; that that's kind of the badge that this town holds up is how much fish they bring in."

Commercial fishing buoys the economy in Newport and Lincoln County in the form of direct income through the landings delivered to the community, but also in the businesses that support fishing and in the tourists that frequent its unique working waterfront, buying fresh fish from the vessels docked there. A lot of the tourists come to Newport "to sport fish, look at the boats, look at the waterfront" or go to a restaurant that serves locally caught seafood.

The importance of fishing to the town is visible in the zoning of the working waterfront. The town has waterfront processing facilities and actually dedicates parking along the port to fishermen. Support facilities include fish processors, shipyard maintenance, electronics, engine and boat repair, and marine supplies.

A lot of fishermen make this community their destination because of the fishing support services offered. Many people in Newport have family or a friend that commercially fishes and fishing provides a strong "community of interest" to those involved in fishing. Walking around town, one can feel the town getting ready and excited for a season (i.e. crab) to start. Fishing provides a cultural value "that you can't really quantify to the community."

*"Newport is a fishing town. A lot of people here derive their income from fishing. There's a lot of trickle down income that comes into Newport from fishing; all the businesses that support fishing around here. And it's also a big part of the culture, as the fishing lifestyle. If you have a commercial fisherman in your family, the way your family runs is different, the way your household runs is different, and that affects a lot of the other culture throughout the city."*

Fishing is "more important than most of the new arrivals in town really want to think." It keeps money coming into the town during the winter when tourism is not occurring. It was estimated that there were 450-500 local fishermen in the community and this estimate does not including those engaged in the distant water fleet.

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

Most fishermen in Newport are male. There are currently some women fishermen (mostly in salmon or shrimp), but there used to be more women involved in the past. There used to be more husband and wife couples that were involved in trolling, but this has decreased (because of the decrease in the troll fishery).

Fishermen are self-employed; each is an individual business. They are independent, dedicated, competitive, and hard-working. Successful fishermen run their operations as

a business; there are variations, a range, in those that run a tight ship to those that don't have efficient and successful operations. Fishermen that are successful work hard and put in the necessary "free work" (painting the boat, cleaning the boat, fixing the gear, fixing the engines, etc.). Whereas new people to fishing "just want the gravy and there's not much gravy to be had."

Boat owners have more responsibility because they have to constantly think about the boat, money spent, gear, etc... and "have that responsibility 365 days a year." Some boat owners hire a skipper to run the vessel.

It has become more difficult to enter fishing and become a boat owner. Permits can be very expensive to purchase. "It's very difficult to enter into the fishing business because it's not just the price of the boat. The price of the boat in this day and age is actually secondary to the price of the permits in the drawer."

Fishermen in Newport love fishing. They are dedicated to remaining in fishing and making a living in spite of changes in regulations and the fact that the industry is experiencing difficulties. Descriptions like "they come to fish because they love the ocean and want to fish." They're innovative and inventive "and seem to invent new ways to catch fish." "Most Newport commercial fishermen...are passionate about fishing. It's in their blood. They just want to go out and fish. And it's a lifestyle." They "really feel [their] connection with the planet" when they fish.

Fishermen in the community of Newport are very diverse; it's a "little microcosm of society in general." They come from different backgrounds; some come from generations of fishermen and some come from other careers. Fishermen are engaged in fishing at different levels. Some fish on small vessels, some on large vessels.

The fleet is diverse as well, with many different gear groups, species targeted and size of vessels. Some of the small vessels

have diversified over the years, in terms of the fisheries they are engaged in. Some have diversified from being engaged solely in salmon to other fisheries such as crab, long-line, hook and line, etc. It goes from "one end of the spectrum to the other" with some vessels that are happy with making enough to get by, some that are struggling, and some that are motivated to increase the size of their operation and all the way up to those that own multiple vessels and make multi-million dollar grosses. The success of the vessels could depend on what fishery a fisherman is engaged in. For example, fishermen engaged in salmon have been struggling but those engaged in whiting or crab are doing pretty well.

Fishermen in Newport have a wide range of education, varying from those that didn't graduate from high school to those with college degrees. However "they all tend to be looking for their own education in fishing."

*Fishermen get a lot of education on the water, getting "a couple thousand hours of lab time in the first six months of their life" on the water.*

There is a large spread of ages in people who fish; from about the high teens to 20s all the way to the 70s. Boat owners are generally older in age, usually forty years of age and up; this is true for skippers as well (between 30-60). Crewmen, on the other hand, are younger in age (20s to 40s). Some fisheries are made-up of older fishermen such as draggers.

It was acknowledged that the Newport fleet is aging. In many cases there are fewer opportunities for younger fishermen to become boat owners: "you kind of almost have to be born into it, a fishing family, and/or you have to have some money to invest,

because you just don't become a deckhand and work your way up like we used to" because of the cost of permits and difficulty in getting a loan. Although, conversely, it was mentioned that if one works hard and manages their money well, they will end up with a boat.

There is also the issue of crew turnover and "if you find a good deckhand, you keep him" and pay them enough to guarantee they stay. One great analogy shared was "I equate it to (office work): it's hard to find a good secretary because the kind of person you end up wanting is someone who wants to be more (the boss). I think it's the same with crew – eventually you're going to want to be a vessel owner."

Some boat owners have crew members for over ten years or more. Larger vessels usually have older and more experienced crew. Some boat owners have new crew members each trip back into port. Some crew members / fishermen have issues with alcohol or drugs; some might jump from boat to boat in order to avoid things such as child support. Others move on because "the grass is always greener on the other side."

There's also an issue with good crew moving to vessels that fish in Alaska. On some of the local boats it can be difficult for crew to make enough money because there's more down time than there used to be and less profit. There's more of a chance for higher pay on vessels that fish in Alaska as these vessels seem to be more stable and have more stable crew as they usually try to hire them for a year at a time.

### Fishing Families

All families of fishermen – boat owners or crew – consider themselves part of the fishing community. Families are often involved in the family business. As one person explained, "when a person owns a boat and fishes, whether it's small or large, the family is going to be involved."

A lot of wives are involved in the management of the business including bookkeeping, issues with crew and paperwork, especially the wives of larger vessels. Sometimes wives work/fish on the boat as well. Often the sons (or daughters) of fishermen will fish or work on the family boat (frequently during the summers) from a young age.

A lot of the sons of fishermen become fishermen themselves and there are some families in Newport that are second, third, or fourth generation fishermen. However, fishing is dangerous work and sometimes there are casualties and family members lose their lives at sea. This is devastatingly sad and Newport, along with other ports, has an annual Blessing of the Fleet and a fishermen's memorial. There have been improvements in safety equipment and "that can make fishing families who are left at home more confident when their spouse is out on the water."

Some family businesses have developed their own value-added, niche markets. They fish, can, and sell their product themselves, "in order to do what they have to do to survive." Some sell to restaurants. Some children take over the family business and the vessel stays in the family. It's nice to work for a fishing family on a family boat, "it seems more tight-knit."

*"The families who are around here are nice to work for. The one I work for takes really good care of us. He pays us all really well. Our checks are always good. If we ever are broke and we need an advance, he will always have one for us...he invites all of us [crew and captain to his parties]. He treats us [crewmen] all as equals. I have a lot of respect for some of the fishing families still in town."*

There are, however, less fishing family businesses (family boats) than in the past. Some said they think fewer fishermen are going to want to bring their sons / kids into fishing because there are fewer chances to get high-paying jobs. “Unless you have somebody who’s a multimillionaire behind you to buy your way in, there’s nowhere to go and work up the ladder now. That’s why it’s going to kill the heritage here.” Some fishermen today are requesting that their children to attend college before becoming fishermen.

When fishing is good, fishermen are often gone. Fishermen that are engaged in the Alaska fleet must travel frequently from Oregon to Alaska. There can be family hardships and difficulties resulting from fishermen being gone so often, including missing their children grow up, clashes between partners when the fisherman returns home, and feelings of loneliness and lack of support for the wife during times when their fisherman is out on the water and away from the community. A positive step to address this has come from Oregon Sea Grant Extension and Newport Fishermen’s Wives. Over the years, they have been involved in programs aimed at strengthening the community and support for the partner who is left at home (while the fisherman is fishing) and for the rest of the family.

Fishermen’s wives have often been involved in volunteering at schools and other community venues. Yet today, most fishing wives in Newport hold outside jobs, although the wives of owners of the larger boats might be less likely to hold an outside job (because the larger or Alaska vessels make a larger income). Sometimes wives hold outside jobs to receive health insurance for the family. Some hold jobs to be able to bring in money during the slow times in fishing. “Most of the fishing wives I know have jobs. It really takes two incomes for the most part, in order to run a household, even if it’s a fishing family... but they also have

the extra job of running a whole household by themselves.” Fishermen are gone a lot and the wife handles all the duties of the household while the fisherman is out fishing, including raising the children and paying the bills.

Fishing is a cyclical industry; it’s always had high and low years. What matters is what one chooses to do with the funds from those high years in order to last through the low years. However, there is even less stability in fishing now than in the past. It’s becoming more difficult to make a living in fishing. There used to be more highliners (those who make a lot of money from fishing) than there are today. There’s also more of a disparity between the rich and the poor within the community, with crew members having a more difficult time.

*“They [fishermen] feel more threatened because of all the regulations, the environmentalists, everybody who is trying to ‘shut down’ fishing. That threatens small family businesses and that in turn threatens livelihoods for children. It is difficult and it’s gotten much worse in the last 10 years.”*

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

Many fishing-related services are available locally (Table 1 below). Gear is amply available, yet some still acquire gear from other communities. The same is true with boat repair service; some is done locally, others are done in neighboring communities (such as Toledo and Reedsport). Larger vessels must travel

farther to acquire boat repair services because of their size.

Fish processing is available in Newport. In recent years, however, one large processor has purchased what used to be different companies and now has various facilities in town. This creates a situation where fishermen have less power in terms of who they decide to sell to, what price they receive for their catch, and when they are dictated to go fishing (because of when the processor wants to receive their catch). There are still some smaller processors in the community as well.

Fuel is available in the community; however it is somewhat of a monopoly situation as well. Some fishermen have fuel

trucked in tankers (for large vessels) from the Willamette Valley.

Ice is available in the community, but it's sometimes difficult to get and there are times when there hasn't been enough available. Some vessels (such as the whiting fleet) don't use ice and this isn't a concern for them.

Book-keeping and legal services are available. Newport has a local, active fishermen's wives organization that helps fishing families in times of a tragedy. It also has local schools and churches. Churches also aid in times of tragedy (loss of local fisherman's life) and sometimes supply counseling. Oregon State University also has offices in Newport as does Sea Grant Extension.

**Table 1: Services and Where Available**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Community Where Available</b>
Gear	Gear is widely available in the community of Newport with at least three main gear / marine supply stores. However some fishermen do purchase gear from other communities (Bellingham and Seattle were mentioned) and even as far away as Europe. There are net repair services available in the community. There are also gear sheds (for the storage of gear) available at the port and terminal.
Fuel	Fuel is available in Newport (with two fuel sellers on the Bay). Some fishermen bring in fuel from the Willamette Valley in tankers (for larger fishing vessels).
Ice	Ice is available in Newport, but more ice facilities would be beneficial. Sometimes it's difficult for the smaller vessels to acquire ice quickly.
Boat Repair	Some boat repair is available in Newport (especially electric maintenance and diesel repair) and some is done dockside; however a lot of the boat repair facilities are located up the river in the neighboring community of Toledo (which is a hub for shipyards and vessel repair) or to the community of Reedsport. Some of the larger vessels are too big for the facilities in Newport and have to be taken elsewhere to do their haul-out work (such as Reedsport and Portland). Some fishermen do their own boat repair.
Processors	There are various fish processors in the community such as: Pacific Choice, Bornstein's, Hallmark, and Trident; however there has been consolidation in recent years with one large processor, Pacific Choice, purchasing what used to be many different companies. There are also smaller, independent buyers and sellers. Companies such as Ocean Beauty, Newport Seafood (became Pac. Choice), Pacific Shrimp, Jerry Bates, Regatta (became Hallmark), and New England Seafood are not in operation in the community anymore. The port offers a hoist for offloading and public docks for fishermen to sell their product (for smaller catches).
Bookkeeping	Have bookkeeping services in Newport (and some that specialize in fishing); however some people do their own bookkeeping.
Legal Services	Legal services are available in Newport with some attorneys that specialize in maritime law. Some people still go to larger cities such as Seattle and Portland for major legal troubles (such as the loss of life on a vessel).
Social Contacts	Churches, schools, an active fishermen's wives organization, exist in the community of Newport as well as Oregon State University facilities (including Hatfield Marine Science Center) and Extension offices.

## **Fishing Community Communication**

### Communication within the fishing community

Communication among fishermen in Newport is “largely informal, everything from radio conversations to lunch meetings to just chance encounters on the dock or in gear stores and the grocery stores.” There’s daily one-on-one communication and information on what is currently going on is passed on among members of the fishing community. Some respected and knowledgeable members of the industry are sometimes sought out to help disseminate information to other fishermen. “We don’t go too long without knowing what’s going on within the fishing community.”

Fishermen congregate at a local cafés or at gear stores and exchange information. However a lot of this informal communication can be rumors or not entirely accurate and “probably you’d have to leave (the café) and then go down to (the gear store) to hear the other side of the story.”

A lot of members of Newport fishing fleet are involved in various gear or species specific associations: the Fishermen’s Marketing Association, the commodity commissions (crab, trawl, salmon, albacore, etc.). These associations hold meetings and provide information to fishermen who are members and others. For example, many crab fishermen are involved in yearly West Coast crab conference calls that discuss the crab season (before it begins) and these calls help the fishermen *and their families* have a better idea of when the season will begin.

However “one problem is reaching the fishermen who don’t belong to associations.” Englund Marine provides a meeting space for organizations in the upstairs floor of their gear store.

There is a monthly fishermen’s forum held by the Port of Newport “to allow the

fishermen to come in and just discuss issues with the port and have one-on-one communication with important officials and employees.” Information is also received through local newsletters and the local newspaper, and Oregon Sea Grant Extension and Newport Fishermen’s Wives help to communicate information to fishermen. Sea Grant “does a great job of getting information out to the fishing industry” and plays an important, critical role in disseminating the information from fisheries managers.

### Communication with other organizations

Communication between members of the fishing community and the rest of the community of Newport could be better; it can be difficult because of a divide between “the uptown people and the fishermen.” “We’re trying to get these groups together so that they understand where the fish and the food come from, and that the commercial fishing industry isn’t about raping and pillaging and going out and taking the last fish.”

There has been an effort to educate the Chamber of Commerce and others on fishing by providing “dock walks” to provide educational talks by economic experts and explanations from fishermen as to the importance of fishing.

### Communication with fisheries managers

Fishermen in Newport are managed by two possible councils depending on their engagement in fishing: the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (for those engaged in Alaska fishing) and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (for those engaged in West Coast fishing).

Some members of the fishing community of Newport are frustrated with the fisheries management process. “The council process appears to be more of a process to satisfy the requirement to have a

public hearing. In a lot of respects, anybody who is responsible for making a decision has their mind made-up before they go to the public process...and we have a tough time explaining to them why they need to do things differently. So we end up being frustrated to a point where it's almost like you don't want to be involved in the process anymore because you're not getting anywhere." It seems that fisheries managers ask for the opinions of fishermen, but then often ignore them which "it's sad because the people that know about the community are the people within the community."

Fishermen recognize that it is important to stay involved in the council process and a lot of Newport fishermen attend council meetings. They are more involved in the State and Federal fisheries management processes than in other ports.

Conversely it was said that many fishermen don't often attend council meetings because they "can't afford to miss fishing time to go to meetings." These meetings are expensive to attend and are often in far away locations which are not convenient.

Federal and State fisheries managers communicate with fishermen through meetings, mailings, email, websites, and faxes. However, some fishermen don't have access to the Internet and email, or even regular access to mail. Fish processors and gear stores help to disseminate the information by hanging messages from fisheries managers on their bulletin boards.

Gear specific fishing associations brief their members on upcoming council meetings, issues that are being discussed, and these organizations decide on their position as an association on the proposed council measures. ODFW also holds meetings to inform fishermen of council matters.

Some feel that there's a "communication gap between the management and the

fishery." There is a disconnect between scientists and fishermen. This is unfortunate because fishermen are out on the water and have vast knowledge of what is occurring out there, and there should be improvements in "the communication between the people that are making the decisions that affect us."

There is an effort in Newport "trying to facilitate the relationship between scientists and fishermen." Oregon Sea Grant hosts the Scientists and Fishermen Exchange (SAFE), regular meetings three times a year where fishermen and scientist discuss what is known and what they'd like to know more about concerning topics of mutual interest.

Newport was said to have good access to communication with fisheries managers because of where the ODFW local office and NMFS local office are located (near the Hatfield Marine Science Center); "right across the street."

Community members spoke of their good relationship with ODFW. As one person explained, "there's a few people [at ODFW] we can go to directly who are really helpful. And I think the fishermen and those folks work together as a team pretty well." ODFW holds meetings to inform fishermen of various issues (such as crab pot limits) and staff members are "readily available for discussions on different topics."

*Some Newport fishermen expressed that communication with fisheries managers is good. "Fishermen don't always like what the fishery managers provide in information, restrictions, and regulations, but I think they also understand that by working with fisheries managers, it helps protect their own resources."*

### Communication with Coast Guard

Community members spoke of their good relationship with the Coast Guard. Newport fishermen “rely on the Coast Guard every time they cross that bar or return, or if there are problems at sea.” The Coast Guard has not only sea rescue services in Newport, but also air rescue services.

The Coast Guard participates in the Newport “Blessing of the Fleet” ceremony and the ministers (who bless the fleet) are located on a Coast Guard vessel. They are involved in Fishermen Appreciation Day where they check fishing vessels and gear and help to put on a safety class.

They also help in times of tragedy and “really step up and help get the information to the people.” This good relationship with the Coast Guard was mentioned to be propagated by Newport Fishermen’s Wives who invites Coast Guard members to seafood dinners and help them to “feel part of the community.” Many Coast Guard members participate in the community which is valued by fishing community members. The minority opinion was that there’s not currently a good relationship with the Coast Guard because of personnel changes.

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

Several management topics were brought up in the 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 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.

These salmon closures have substantially impacted those involved in salmon fishing and some people lost their boats or homes because they were not able to pay their mortgages. Disaster years hurt salmon fishermen and their families as well as support services such as gear stores.

*“The salmon disaster was huge. Even being in the business as long as I have, I didn’t realize how much salmon is part of the coastal fleet as well as Newport. I was really surprised it was as big as it was. I mean that really hurt... that pinched us pretty hard”.*

Some re-training programs were offered to some salmon fishermen. Relief funds were provided from the government with good intentions. However, 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. “It doesn’t seem like it was handled correctly ... how it was broken down... who got the money and how it was distributed.”

#### Groundfish buyback

The groundfish buyback was conducted in 2003. The buyback was intended to limit the number of boats involved in groundfish fishing by purchasing boats and permits from their owners.

There were 8 medium-sized (75 foot) groundfish boats from Newport that were purchased during the buyback. Since all the vessels that were bought out from the community are medium sized, “now all we have is big boats and small boats. There are virtually no medium-sized groundfish boats” in Newport now. These medium-sized boats

“were the family, continuous operation boats” and the groundfish vessels that remain in Newport are draggers and big water boats.

The intention of the buyback – to reduce the fleet – was perceived as good. The buyback did accomplish removing some vessels from the fishery.

However “a lot of those boats weren’t real productive boats, but some were. The effects it had on the Port of Newport were moorage...because a lot of those boats got sold and went to Seattle...but a lot of them didn’t get sold and (4-8) are still in town, tied to the dock” using moorage space in Newport and South Beach. “Some guys that sold their boats just went on to [purchase] other boats” and in many cases in the same fishery (which was not supposed to be allowed because of a non-competitive clause). Some who sold their boats had proposed a low bid to fisheries managers and were disappointed when they received this price and later wished they had not taken part in the buyback. Some of the gear stores thought they would be hurt by the buyback, but weren’t.

*“If you look at the social and economic impacts...the buyback was the worst disaster for some parts of the coast than it’s ever been.”*

Communities along the coast were affected in different ways by the buyback. Certain areas are now over-utilized (because a port still has a good sized fleet and thus the fishing is concentrated in that area). “Other communities have had almost all their vessels bought back, so then the processor had to close.” Certain areas are now under-utilized (because a port has no groundfish vessels now and there is no fishing in that

area) because the fleet only radiates so far from the port.

There were other misunderstandings or unintended consequences. For example, some people didn’t initially understand that the money which was used by the government for the buyback program would be funded by other fishermen. For the most part it is considered not fair that all fishermen have to fund the buyback, especially when it was perceived to benefit some fishermen that used it to profit unfairly or purchase new vessels in the same fishery or just get “better boats and better gear.”

#### Permit stacking – black cod or groundfish

Permit stacking (currently being done with black cod and groundfish) is where a vessel in a fishery is allowed a certain number of pounds which can be caught in a certain amount of time. Vessels “stack” permits (multiple permits on one vessel) in order to be able to catch more of the same kind of fish per vessel. This can be done by leasing or purchasing the permits.

For some, this is a great thing because if you have one permit “it’s just barely worth putting the gear on the boat and going fishing...when you consider the other fishing opportunities you have that are lost when you have to stop fishing and change over the gear to switch to another fishery. It makes more economical sense to stack several permits and be able to fish continuously.”

Conversely, it was expressed that when a fishery is switched over to a permit stacking scenario that it should be considered on a case by case basis because “once you start permit stacking...you start putting people out of business...less crew members, less boats.”

#### Halibut fishing area

The current regulations on halibut – which include a small fishing zone outside

100 fathoms and inside 30 – “has had a huge impact because very little halibut can be caught depending on where the fish are.” This results in a huge gamble as to whether or not to spend the money to reach the fishing grounds because there’s no way to foresee whether or not one will catch one’s quota.

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

In the 1960s most of the commercial fishing vessels in Newport were wooden vessels, 60’ and under in size, and involved in salmon, Dungeness crab, very little shrimp, and some tuna fishing. Fishing was open-access.

In the mid-70s a big change happened. “We began to see almost a revolution ... where we saw a number of new vessels, a lot of them steel, some fiberglass, with bigger engines, sophisticated electronic equipment, and lots of horsepower to pull nets in mid water instead of just the bottom. Some bright young skippers jumped into the fishery who were well-educated, hard chargers, had a lot of ambition and competitiveness, and the whole sense of the fishery changed at that point in time.”

In the 1970s-1980s the Capital Construction Fund allowed fishermen to set aside pre-tax income to use to purchase new vessels or repair old ones. The government encouraged growth of the fishing industry through this fund.

*“A lot of fishermen invested heavily in that fund and that’s one of the reasons money became so available for new vessel construction and old vessel reconstruction.”*

The mid-water trawl fisheries developed in late 70s and early 80s (rockfish). Involvement in the whiting fishery began at this time. Shrimp was priced at \$0.23 to \$0.25 per pound before 1980 and “it was a very viable business for 100-150 shrimpers” in the State of Oregon (with about 60 in Newport).

In the 1980s there was a huge buildup of the salmon fleet. There was also a big boom the 80s in Alaskan king crab fishing and some fishermen from Newport took part in the fishery and made a large amount of money. “Still to this day, some of the #1 boats up there are Newport boats.” Some Newport residents were involved in Alaska fishing at this time and were able to purchase their vessels from the income they made.

Regulations were developed in the 1980s and entry was limited. “Prior to 1980, all you had to have was a strong back and a willingness to take a little bit of financial risk and go out and go to work...the ocean was just like the First National Bank. All the teller windows were open and you could pretty much go out there and just get money, just like making a withdrawal.”

In the 1980s the West Coast fleet was new and “they really thrived.” For many, the 1980s were good years as far as the prices received for one’s catch (especially in comparison to costs such as fuel). However those prices have, in many cases, stayed the same over the past 30 years (whereas fuel and repairs have at least doubled in price since then).

In the 1990s the effects of overfishing (from the 80s) started to become visible. The groundfish industry was extremely cutback and these cut backs “were devastating to a lot of fishermen and fishing families. A lot of people went out of business.” Boats that were involved in bottom trawling had to diversify and become engaged in multiple

fisheries; trawlers today are still frequently involved in multiple fisheries.

There were several El Nino years in the 1990s which especially affected salmon and there was a crash in the salmon fishery in the 90s. Many salmon fishermen moved into crab fishing in the winters and the Dungeness crab fishery began to build-up in Newport. Involvement in shrimping decreased considerably in the 90s (today there are about 3 shrimpers in Newport).

In the 1990s and 2000s it's necessary to have permits for limited entry fisheries, and in some cases, have an amount of allocated catch (IFQs - Individual Fishing Quotas). The trawl fleet was cut by 50% in the 2003 groundfish buyback. Recently rockfish started to rebound.

There have been tremendous changes in the salmon fishery as well. After the 2006 disaster, salmon fishermen were "a huge group of people who used to make a living catching salmon, and now they can't do that anymore at all; there are people losing their homes and boats because of that." The whiting fishery season was cut-short in 2007 because of an issue with bycatch (of little rock). The distant water fleet, however, is still doing well today.

*Fishermen are adaptable and "if they can't fish for one thing, most fishermen will go out and fish for something else if they can."*

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

### Overall health of the ocean surrounding Newport

Perceptions varied as to the health of the ocean surrounding Newport. Some community members said that the fisheries are probably not as healthy as they once were. Overall, the perception is that the

overall health of the ocean in the area around Newport is good or at least ok.

Some fisheries are not doing very well (such as salmon), but the other species are doing well for the most part. "I think the fisheries are healthier than they have been in a long time." It was also expressed that "stocks are probably healthier than we believe" and that the perception is a lot worse than the conditions truly are.

There is an abundance of fish in the area around Newport "because of the changes that the industry has done." It was commonly expressed that Newport fishermen have been proactive about making changes that will benefit the fisheries.

There are rich feeding grounds off of the coast of Newport. There are natural variations in stocks and different species (such as crab and tuna) have cycles of good and bad years. "You talk to any fisherman who has been in the business 20, 30, or even 50 years, and they'll tell you that the fisheries are cyclical. You'll have a good crab year or two and then you might not have another good crab year for another five years, but it always seems to come back."

Whiting is healthy and also goes in cycles and "a lot of that has to do with conditions in the ocean at the time and survival of the young." There have been record years in crab harvest and large deliveries of tuna. There are a lot of shrimp. Halibut is doing well.

There are a large number of rockfish, which was attributed to the Rockfish Conservation Area and the buyback. There are a large number of canary rockfish, more than biologists might think, because of their limited means of surveying canary rockfish. Little rock has rebounded to the point where it was hard to avoid catching it during the whiting fishery (as bycatch). Ling cod is also rebounding quickly. "The biggest challenge of fisheries off this coast is bycatch because the stocks of these other

fish are so large now that it's hard to stay away from them."

But that depends on the fishery one is involved in. Salmon are not doing as well as they were in the past. "I think salmon fishing changes almost from year to year based on what the outfalling is and what the survival rate is in the ocean. I think that more than anything, conditions in the ocean, if we get an El Nino or something, it causes a downturn in salmon." Salmon is also dependent on river conditions such as in the Klamath River where if there's a drought year then the river goes down (and the water temperature increases) and this can cause the smolt to die.

#### Dead zone

Long-time residents explained that there has always (or off and on throughout history) been a dead zone around Newport and that the media has blown the current dead zone out of proportion. "I think those of us who have been around here for a few years feel that the dead zone has been there. I mean I can remember back 35-40 years ago, we had similar occurrences of lots of dead crab and fish washing up on the beach and didn't think much about it. But my guess is there was probably a dead zone happening then. I don't think it has anything to do with the health of the ocean."

Perceptions varied. Some attributed the dead zone to a lack of northwest wind and lack of upwelling. Others mentioned they had not heard of the dead zone before (from old-time fishermen) and were concerned that they might be exacerbating the dead zone by such actions as dumping whiting carcasses into the middle of the hypoxic zone.

#### Weather impacts such as El Nino and cycles in the ocean

Weather events are cyclical with some warm water regimes and then some cold water regimes. El Nino years result in a

different distribution of fish; warmer water with some squid and rockfish from California appear off the coast of Newport.

*When there are changes in the temperature of the water "you can see the changes in the fish stocks" with some fish species doing better in warmer water and some doing better in colder water.*

The water in 2007 was warmer than in some years, by about "three or four degrees above what we usually would see this time of year, within a certain distance from the coast." Tuna were being caught in warmer water than normal and closer to the coast. If there is no Northwest wind and thus no upwelling, that decreases certain fisheries. This also is cyclical.

### **Perceptions of the Future**

#### Imagined future

When participants were asked what they *imagine* the fishing community of Newport will be like in five years, there were a variety of answers related to fishing decreasing or increasing. Some people said that they think there will be fewer vessels and people involved in fishing in Newport. "A lot of the smaller fishermen who do the multiple fisheries are the ones that will survive"; those that have developed a niche will survive. If rationalization occurs there will likely be a consolidation in the fleet which means fewer jobs including fewer crew jobs.

A majority of people mentioned that they think salmon will continue to get worse and there might not be a salmon industry. Some mentioned salmon will be smaller but stable.

Conversely, some said they think fishing will continue as it is now and remain strong

and will be “pretty status quo” with the same number of vessels involved. Newport has a great infrastructure that will continue to draw fishermen. Some residents said they think fishing will be stronger as long as we “make sure we can sustain the stock for future years.”

The future was said to depend on several variables, including the development of wave energy and marine reserves. It was hypothesized that there will be marine reserves around Newport in five years. With dividing up the ocean for these purposes “what we might have in five years is an ocean that’s totally zoned.” The Rockfish Conservation Area already decreases the possible areas that can be fished, but with these new developments there could be less area available to fishing which could impact the future of fishing. “We could have a large competition for a space to do business.”

With the price of fuel, insurance, and medical coverage continuing to increase this was also said to possibly affect the future of fishing if the price received for one’s catch remains the same in five years. “If the price of fish stays the same, you’ll see massive changes.”

Some suggested that if crab fishermen don’t receive some sort of local control for their fishery that crab fishing will decrease and “the crab fishery is the fishery that’s been keeping most of these ports alive. That means your processor goes away.”

#### Desired future

When asked to describe *what they would like* the future of the fishing community of Newport to look like, there were a variety of answers as well. Most mentioned they would like fishing to stay at a sustainable level. They would like the ability to plan seasons (as opposed to finding out when fishing will begin at the last minute).

Some said they would like the community to be as it was before with fewer

regulations and more of an ability to make money. Yet a lot of fishing community members mentioned that they would like the future to be “just as it is” for the most part.

*“We’re close to what every fishing community should be like, so I think without much more effort, we could be one of the best.”*

It was frequently expressed that they would like to see a change in fishing processing. With either more buyers available in the community or a chance for fishermen to buy back some of the processing and create a coop. As explained previously, a large portion (“90-some odd percent of crab buying”) of the fish processing in Newport is controlled by one large processing company, allowing the processor to have control over when crab fishing occurs and at what price fishermen receive for their catch. Fishermen have “lost any ability to negotiate.”

Some shared that they would like the creation of a market for fishermen to sell their catch. Something similar to a Saturday market or a “market on the waterfront where if somebody wanted to sell their product to the public without sitting on their boat” they could do so. Others suggested the creation of a special section of the port where all the boats that sell their product could be located so the public could have easier access.

Many expressed that they would like the perception of fishermen by the public and environmentalists to be changed in the future. That the media’s portrayal of fishermen as pillagers of the sea is incorrect and something should be done to change this perception.

Putting “fishermen in more of a management role” was also mentioned as well as more interaction with fishermen and

managers (including more incorporation of fishermen's knowledge). Having a "change in the management scheme of things where they're having more meetings here and more available to them." As was increasing the technology used to track catch statistics in order to be at more real time and using better data for stock assessments and decision-making.

Other things that were mentioned as being desired for the future were better moorage and cold storage because of the shortage of ice at times. "A good haul-out facility for the bigger boats" which would provide more jobs and keep money spent in the community. Lastly, more parking spots along the water for fishermen and the services they need (such as spots for visiting vessel repair services) are desired because it can be difficult to park during tourist season.