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Informing Oregon's Marine Protected Area (MPA) Baseline
Past and Present Tribal Uses of Marine Resources

by

Sabra Marie TallChief Comet

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Environmental Management

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Portland State University

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Abstract:

Oregon implemented a series of marine reserves from 2012 through the beginning of 2016 that will be evaluated in 2023. As part of that evaluation, several studies are focusing on the impact of the reserves on coastal communities. This project focused on tribal members with ancestral territory on the Oregon coast. Tribal members from three tribes, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians were interviewed for this project. The interviews centered around two themes: 1) past and present use of marine and coastal species, and 2) experiences and opinions about the implementation and policies of Oregon's marine reserves. A mapping exercise in which tribal members marked where they gathered species was performed concurrently with the interviews. Shared patterns in the interview narratives around changes in plant/animal populations, habitats, and land uses are the focus on Chapter 2. Spatial information from the mapping exercise is the focus of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 briefly introduces techniques for efficiently engaging with tribes on resource management projects, using this project as the example application for the techniques. Over 150 species were reported by 28 participants in 23 interviews, and the areas marked during the mapping exercise covered over 12,000 square kilometers. Several trends were corroborated across interviews, including the timing of two smelt populations, and the crash and slow recovery of the Starry Flounder. There was traditional/subsistence use reported in areas overlapping four of the five marine reserves in Oregon, although some of the activity had stopped well before the implementation of the reserves. The majority of participants were in favor of the existence of marine reserves, but had a variety of suggestions for changes to the implementation and policy.

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