Changing Space, Changing Place: Marine Renewable Energy and Coastal Communities in Oregon

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Changing Space, Changing Place
Working out the technical kinks is critical.

Having the best available data and management practices about the environmental dimension is vital.

However, permitting processes rarely fail on technical or scientific grounds. Rather, because of a failure to pay attention to the human dimension.

Decision makers need an understanding of how people experience and relate to the ocean.
The emerging marine renewable energy industry has the opportunity to be developed in a socially responsible manner.

✓ What does “developed in a socially responsible” manner mean?

✓ What are the steps it should take to assure this?

✓ Who needs to be involved to assure this?
HDWE studied...

• Public’s knowledge and values and their opinions re: wave energy.

• Link between knowledge/understanding and acceptance or lack of support re: wave energy.

• Wave energy information sources.

• Wave energy and community well being.
Six research projects in four thematic areas:

1. Socioeconomic and Sociopolitical Influences on Permitting and Planning

2. Comparison of Wave Energy to other forms of Electricity Generation

3. BMP for Permitting and Management

4. Perceptions of and Effects on Communities of Place and Interest
Why is studying the human dimension important?

- Inform research, decision makers, developers, stakeholders, and the public
- Design research and policy processes to meet citizen/community concerns and maximize policy input
- Create effective public education and engagement efforts.
Lessons Learned re:

- Governance
- Socioeconomic and Sociopolitical Influences
- Sustainability and Acceptability
- Outreach and Engagement: putting perceptions and perspectives to work
Governance

• Communication and planning is critical.

• Invest in research.

• Testing projects was the greatest area of support and agreement among stakeholders and policy actors.

• Share results with the public.
Socioeconomic and Sociopolitical Influences: Public Perceptions / Communities of Place

• Overall positive attitude, yet not enough info to form an opinion.

• Impact community well being? Misconceptions fueled by mutual distrust. Until MRE is tested “on the ocean” it remains to be seen how community well-being will be impacted.

• Regional differences in attitudes and familiarity with wave energy exists; coastal residents hold more defined and intense opinions. Perceptions can’t be pigeon-holed into any one demographic group or place. Threats/opportunities were shaped as much by imaginations as by empirical evidence.
Socioeconomic and Sociopolitical Influences: Communities of Interest

- Ally networks exist within government; and b/t conservation and technical experts, and local government and ocean users. Opponent networks exist b/t ocean users and the energy industry, technical experts, federal and state government.

- Primary source of information were the energy industry, utilities, and technical experts. BUT there was contradiction regarding trust with sources.
## Sustainability and Acceptability

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<th>Types of sustainability</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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Coastal communities of place and of interest are:

- **Interested**
- willing to accept some change, but
- they feel the Oregon coast is worth slowing the wave energy process down so that they can work with others to reach a desired, mutually-beneficial future.
So if you want to reach and engage community members...

- Public meetings are important BUT few utilized them to gain new info or learn about wave energy.

- **Focus outreach efforts on *local* newspapers/media.**

- Avoid pre-determined locations and commercial scale projects.

- Use local and state government as political mediators.
• Foster cooperation.
• Design the outreach and engagement process.
• Engage early and often.
• Expect challenges and successes. Use both to create progress in
  – Systems for working together
  – Listen, listen, listen...then speak
  – Create a myriad of possible solutions for lasting agreements
Thank you!
Questions?

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