



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
December 13 2024

East Region

Nick Myatt, Region Manager

Catchability of wild and hatchery steelhead by sport anglers differs in the Deschutes River

A multi-decadal creel sampling of the Deschutes River steelhead sport fishery by ODFW found that wild summer steelhead were caught more frequently than hatchery steelhead. In our study, wild steelhead represented 27% to 31% of the summer steelhead entering the Deschutes River fishery area, yet they accounted for 65% of angler catch (wild steelhead must be released). Thus, wild steelhead disproportionately supported angler success.



Creel sampling crew member at Macks Canyon.

We explored a number of possible mechanisms which might cause this discrepancy. For example, a high proportion of hatchery steelhead (66%) are retained by anglers and so are not available for recapture (2000-2021). We used a combination of creel data, adult trap data, dam counts and a simulation model to demonstrate that harvest of hatchery steelhead was unlikely to be the primary driver of the catchability difference between wild and hatchery steelhead.

While considering this and other possible mechanisms, we hypothesized that a difference in catchability between wild and hatchery steelhead is the most likely mechanism driving the observed patterns. Catchability is the

probability of an individual fish getting caught by an angler.

Understanding catch of wild and hatchery steelhead in fisheries is important to both maintaining sport angling opportunity and ensuring conservation of wild stocks. Our results also highlight how important healthy wild steelhead runs are throughout the Columbia River basin to angler success, especially in the Deschutes River steelhead fishery. These findings were recently published in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management and are publicly available here:

<https://afspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/nafm.11034>. The underlying data from

this study was used, in part, to develop the current fishery management framework in the Deschutes, which is protective of wild steelhead at low abundances given the high catch rates. For next steps, in addition to wild stock composition studies, the findings also suggest exploring how to improve hatchery fish catchability

Beef Northwest internship

ODFW assisted Beef Northwest with developing and piloting an Agriculture and Natural Resources Internship in Baker County this past summer. This unique opportunity was designed to provide local high school students hands-on experience exposing them to a wide range of job opportunities and issues in agriculture and natural resources fields. The internship also highlighted the close relationship between working lands and natural resource management.

Over an eight-week period, eight high school interns, employed by Beef Northwest, worked with nine different businesses, agencies and non-profit organizations. Participating entities included Beef Northwest, Sustainable Northwest, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Forestry, AgWest Farm Credit, Thomas Angus Ranch, Lightning Bolt Cattle Company, Powder Basin Watershed Council, Oregon State University, Natural

Resources Conservation Service, Oregon Department of Agriculture and many others.

The intern's experiences included building beaver dam analogs, utilizing emerging technologies for livestock management, mountain goat surveys, vegetation plot sampling, feedlot management and nutrient management, shrub planting, handling cattle, Firewise communities, duck banding, timber stand inventory, regenerative agriculture practices and much more! Visit [@bcanr_interns on Instagram](#) for a week-by-week summary of the interns' summer.

Roadkills of Oregon project update

This summer, ODFW launched a new project to help crowdsource data on roadkills using the popular community science platform iNaturalist. [Roadkills of Oregon](#), a collaboration between ODFW and the Oregon Zoo, seeks to improve understanding of the impacts of roads on Oregon's wildlife, and to identify roadkill hot spots and vulnerabilities among a diversity of animals, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. This information can help reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and make roadways safer.

Roadways and vehicular traffic are a significant cause of injury and mortality to Oregon's wildlife. Wildlife species need to move across the landscape to access resources, including food, water, and shelter. Roadways crisscross and fragment wildlife habitat, making it more difficult for wildlife to safely move. Almost all wildlife species in the state face some level of risk from roadways, and many thousands of animals are killed each year by vehicles on Oregon's roads.

Since [Roadkills of Oregon](#) was launched publicly in May of 2024, more than 367 people have contributed observations of more than 2,200 road-killed animals in Oregon representing more than 250 different species. Observations can be added through the iNaturalist app or on the [iNaturalist website](#) and require a photo of the roadkill and location the animal was found. ODFW will use these data to learn where and when roadkills are occurring and what species are most often involved. More information on

the project and a tutorial on how to participate can be found at [myODFW.com](#).

West Region

Chris Kern, Region Manager

Experimenting with recording units to monitor wolves

Autonomous recording units (ARUs) are acoustic monitoring devices that can be deployed in lieu of other forms of monitoring equipment (e.g. trail cameras, telemetry equipment). Recently wildlife biologists in ODFW's Rogue Watershed have been using them to record vocalizations of wolves as part of wolf program monitoring.

Much like remote trail cameras, ARUs can be deployed for long periods, preprogrammed to record at very specific times of the day and at different vocalization frequencies to better capture the desired species' vocalization. In certain situations, ARUs are more useful since they have a 360-degree monitoring direction and a maximum range of two miles so staff can monitor much larger areas at one time.

ARUs are also a third of the cost of trail cameras and can be deployed in more remote areas using a staggered, high-density configuration where each unit is programmed to overlap on the times they collect data. For example, one unit can be programmed to collect for ten days until the batteries get low, then a secondary unit deployed at the same time can be programmed to collect data starting at day ten and end on day 20 where another unit can start collecting. This style of ARU deployment provides a potentially much longer monitoring span which can be useful in remote areas that are seasonally inaccessible.

ARUs can be used to locate wolves in areas where they are suspected to have taken up residency. This can determine denning/rendezvous locations, reproduction and potentially the number of pack members.

One of the biggest challenges using ARUs is data analysis. Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs can be trained to detect wolf vocalizations and narrow down the immense amount of data collected, a much-preferred

methodology since manually analyzing the data takes a considerable amount of time. However, to create an AI program that will reliably detect the many different vocalizations of wolves, a comprehensive library of sounds needs to be compiled—a daunting task but worthwhile for increased monitoring effectiveness of wolf behavior into the future.



A howling wolf captured on an ODFW trail camera.



The Rogue District is experimenting with using Autonomous Recording Units to record wolf vocalizations.

Annual Denman Youth Pheasant Hunt

The 34th annual Youth Pheasant hunt was held at Denman Wildlife Area on the weekend of Sept. 14-15. Since 1990, the Denman youth hunt has been an anticipated fall event.

This year, 96 youth took advantage of this opportunity and harvested 108 pheasants. At least 10 dog handlers helped 76 percent of the youth hunt over a dog. Live birds left in the field after the youth hunt closed were available to be hunted by fee hunt participants the morning of Sept. 16.

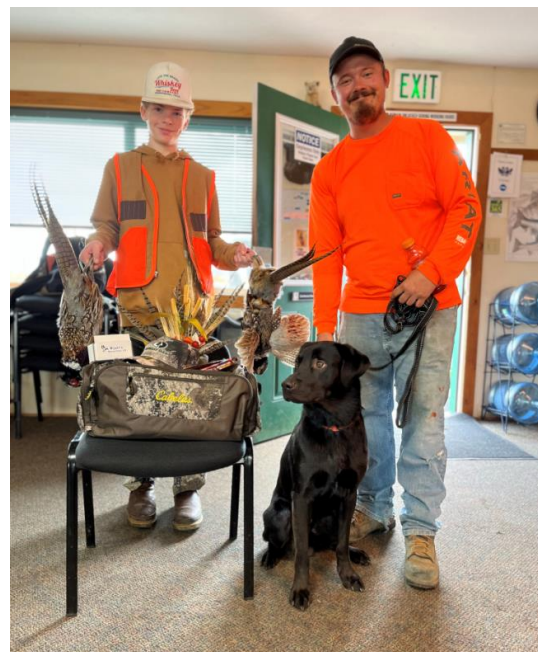
This event is a great example of sportsmen, volunteers and groups gathering to help support

young bird hunters. Rogue Valley Chapter of the Oregon Hunter's Association (OHA), the Josephine County OHA, and the Rogue Valley Sporting Spaniel Club funded the purchase of most of the birds. United Hunters and Sportsmen, Delta Waterfowl, and local volunteers purchased food and cooked the traditional pancake, egg, and sausage breakfast prior to the hunt and a hot dog lunch for returning hunters.

With the help of these organizations, the Denman Wildlife Area staff were able to obtain about 1,300 pheasants to be distributed throughout the pheasant season. For the youth hunt, 600 pheasants were released.



Denman Wildlife Area Manager Clayton Barber gives a safety talk before the hunt begins.



Knox Peterman was the “Longest Tail” winner for Saturday’s hunts. Dog handler Hunter Carnes helped with Knox’s hunt.



This group of generational hunters enjoyed the youth pheasant hunt opportunity.

Wetland restoration project completed

A creek identified as one of the largest contributors of sediment that degrades Tenmile Lake (North Coos County) water quality was recently rehabilitated.

The Benson Creek stream and wetland restoration project restored about 15 acres of degraded pasture back to emergent and scrub-shrub wetland habitat, and the channelized creek was re-meandered out onto the lower floodplain.

Project goals to create a wetland on agricultural lands adjacent to Tenmile Lakes, improve habitat for fish and wildlife, and improve water quality were all achieved. This winter, juvenile coho will have more and higher quality rearing habitat at the stream/lake ecotone.

The project was on industrial timber land owned by Lone Rock Resource. The company donated 20 acres of land for this restoration project located eight miles east of Lakeside. There is potential for future beneficial restoration upstream in the Benson subbasin.

ODFW Charleston office biologists were technical advisors on the project lead by Tenmile Lakes Basin Partnership.



An aerial view of agricultural pasture land adjacent to South Tenmile Lake before restoration work began.



Non-native canary grass was removed, and the area was then planted with willows and log structures were created.

Walker meadows project

A new meadow near Veneta is flourishing thanks to partners at the Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Wildlife Foundation and The Xerces Society. At Walker Point Montane Meadow this summer the grass was coming in, pollinator plants were drawing bumblebees and honeybees, birds were nesting in boxes and deer and elk have been seen on camera.

Project partners cleared trees from around a smoke detection camera at 2,300' elevation, leaving snags for cavity-nesting birds like woodpeckers and mounting nesting boxes for purple martins. Staff also removed stumps, burned slash, and planted native wildflowers for bumblebees and other pollinators.

Western bluebird, common nighthawk, pileated woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, and several bat species including California myotis, fringed

myotis, hoary bats, and silvered-hair bat have all been documented feeding in the forest opening. Meadows like this also provide optimal forage for small and large mammals such as moles, voles, rabbits, bobcats, Roosevelt elk, black-tailed deer, mountain lions, and black bears. This project is an excellent example of project partnership and the benefits that early successional habitat restoration can provide to wildlife species in the coast range.



L-R: Flowers in burned area, cured grasses and snags in fall, and spring green up photo at Walker Meadow.

10 years of surplus salmon donations

Salmon River Hatchery worked with the Central Coast Food Web to donate surplus salmon for food bank use. Sixty fish were directed to the Seafood for Schools program, helping students engage with local seafood. An additional ten were provided to Siuslaw, Siletz Valley and the North Bend high schools so that their culinary classes could use them for education. Food Share of Lincoln County has distributed 1,288 salmon dinners to Lincoln County families.

Salmon River Hatchery started this work with Oregon Food Bank, local gleaner groups, and tribes in 2014 with the implementation of The Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan. Excess hatchery fish that are collected at Salmon River Hatchery are dispatched and then given to local gleaner groups and food bank programs. All local gleaner groups must be certified by the Oregon Food Bank as charitable groups that will properly process and handle these donated fish. In the ten years of doing this work, Salmon River Hatchery has donated a total of 13,592 fish to 18 different charitable groups as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians.

Donations from ODFW hatcheries occur across Oregon, in 2023 a total of 9,753 fish (81,788 lbs.) were donated to food banks and an additional 5,224 fish (42,143 lbs.) were donated to tribes. Tribal donations in 2024 are on track to exceed 86,000 lbs..

“It is amazing to be able to give back to our local community and have our fish touch so many people’s lives, from the local food pantry to education in the schools” said Michelle Viss, Fish and Wildlife Supervisor at Salmon River Hatchery.



High school student in culinary classes filets a salmon donated by Salmon River Hatchery.



High school students in culinary classes present salmon donated by Salmon River Hatchery.

Alsea basin wood placement project

ODFW’s Mid-Coast Fish Habitat Restoration Biologist in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Oregon Wildlife Foundation completed a large wood helicopter placement project on tributaries of the Alsea River Basin in early October. The project’s goal was to increase instream complexity and create winter rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids including ESA-listed coastal coho by placing whole trees in reaches of Five Rivers, Green River, and East Fork Lobster Creek. A reach of West Fork Deadwood Creek (Siuslaw Basin) was also included in the contract to complete a project that occurred in October of 2023.

A Chinook helicopter was used to place 778 whole trees in approximately 5 miles of stream reaches. These drainages discharge large volumes of water during winter precipitation events which require trees with specific dimensions to remain within the boundaries of the project reach.

The ecological benefits of this project are immediately realized by providing instream complexity, low velocity rearing refugia and floodplain connectivity. The outstanding weather coupled with a strong partnership consisting of seasoned restoration practitioners made the project a huge success.



Top to bottom: Helicopter in air with tree for placement, project crew works on the ground (Justin Vernon, USFS), helicopter takes off (Justin Vernon, USFS).

Oregon State Police

Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division



Calley Freedom Ely with OSP and her supervisor, ODFW Assistant Fish Biologist Lindsay Powell at Heritage Landing.

A Fish and Wildlife Sergeant in The Dalles presented Calley Freedom Ely (ODFW Creel Surveyor, stationed at Heritage Landing on the lower Deschutes River) with a certificate of appreciation and OSP Fish and Wildlife Division challenge coin for doing an outstanding job this summer and fall in her capacity. She went above and beyond in posting signs, educating the public with angling closures and regulations, and notifying OSP of Fish and Wildlife violations. She also represented ODFW professionally and positively when doing her job and interacting with sport anglers, fishing guides, and the general public. It was agreed upon by her ODFW supervisor, the State Park Volunteer Hosts, and the fishing guides that Calley deserved this recognition.



Poached deer seized by Patrol Sergeant – Patrol Sergeant recognized for efforts.

Oregon State Police received a call of an active deer poaching in Crawfordsville. The only Fish and Wildlife Trooper was over 90 minutes away. A Patrol Division Sergeant responded to the area, and the suspect was still on scene. A Fish and Wildlife Trooper communicated via cell phone and the Patrol Sergeant was able to conduct an interview, seize the appropriate evidence and criminally cite the hunter for Unlawful Take of Buck Deer and Hunting from a Highway. The buck deer was later donated to a local charity. The Patrol Sergeants efforts were much appreciated, and he was later recognized for his efforts.



Poachers apprehended on the Nehalem River during Coho fishery.

A Fish and Wildlife Division Trooper and Astoria Patrol Recruit conducted a boat patrol on Nehalem Bay. The Nehalem Bay has a short wild Coho season, and limits are extremely restrictive. Multiple citations and warnings were issued for Exceed the Period Limit of Wild Coho, Fail to Allow Inspection of Catch, Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card – Wild Coho, Fail to Properly Validate Harvest Card – Wild Coho, Taking Undersized Dungeness Crab, and boating offenses. During the patrol, the Troopers contacted two retired police officers that were angling near downtown Nehalem. The officers said earlier that morning they watched a subject catch 2 Coho, take 1 of them back inside a waterfront house, then return to fishing with 2 other subjects. Later in the day, the Troopers observed 3 subjects matching the description angling from a dock of the waterfront home. The Troopers contacted the subjects who all said that they had been there for 3 days and had not caught or kept any salmon. After subsequent questioning, the subjects admitted to catching and keeping 6 wild Coho. They retrieved multiple packages of fileted salmon, as well as 2 whole wild Coho, from the house. The subjects also had 3 undersized crab. The subjects were cited for multiple offenses and the salmon/crab were seized.



Items seized by Southwest Region Troopers.

Fish and Wildlife Division members on the ground and in the air apprehended subjects unlawfully taking wildlife, hunting with artificial light, and casting light from a motor vehicle while armed. This involved the use of a Wildlife Enforcement Decoy and Department aircraft. In one case, two subjects were contacted after casting light from their vehicle. The driver was displaying signs of impairment and was ultimately arrested for DUII. Multiple items seized as a result of the enforcement efforts are photographed above.

Marine Resources Program

Justin Ainsworth, Marine Resources Program Manager

SEACOR project completed Tillamook Bay estuary assessment

SEACOR (Shellfish and Estuarine Assessment of Coastal OR) is Marine Resources Program's (MRP) team of biologists who rotate through Oregon's estuaries and conduct thorough scientific assessments of shellfish stocks and estuarine habitat. The surveys target recreationally and commercially important bivalve species including cockles, butter clams, gaper clams, and littleneck clams and their habitats. SEACOR's fishery-independent surveys (scientifically designed, not based on harvester landings) of intertidal and subtidal regions of coastal bays are an important snapshot of estuary health and bay clam stock status.

SEACOR just completed a three-year assessment of Tillamook Bay, the third largest estuary in Oregon. Tillamook is a popular destination for recreational bay clam harvesters and supports commercial intertidal and subtidal dive commercial bay clam fisheries. Shellfish fishery management issues and user group conflicts have been growing over the last 10 years leading, in part, to SB1025 (2019) which established the Tillamook Bay Clam Advisory Committee (TBCAC) to discuss these issues and make recommendations to ODFW pertaining to bay clam management.

The recent Tillamook Bay assessment provided an opportunity to update the bivalve stock status of the bay and compare current clam populations to those observed by SEACOR in the 2010-2012

survey of the bay. Bay clams are abundant in Tillamook Bay, especially in the shallow subtidal channels where most of the bay clam populations were found in both surveys. The main differences in the intertidal areas of the bay were an increase in the distribution and biomass of cockles, an increase in biomass of butter clams, and a decrease in the gaper clam population. In contrast, the subtidal populations of bay clams generally had lower biomass for cockle and butter clams relative to the 2010-2012 survey. Even with this decrease in subtidal clam biomass, current stock estimates range from 1-4 million pounds for the clam species that are harvested by the dive fishery. Thus, the management approach used by the agency has helped maintain populations of bay clams in the bay despite large shifts in fishery effort between the two assessments.



Bay clams collected at a site during the subtidal assessment

The SEACOR datasets have already been used by MRP to manage shellfish fisheries and address emerging issues. The data was shared with the TBCAC during their meetings and these results were incorporated into their recommendations to the agency.

The shifts in bay clam stocks from the recent survey have been used to adjust the harvest limits for the commercial intertidal and subtidal dive clam fisheries in Tillamook Bay. The SEACOR data is currently being used by MRP to address emerging issues in the bay. One example of these issues is the evolving eelgrass-shellfish aquaculture-angling conflict recently highlighted in a Sept. 8, 2024 article in *The Oregonian*.

Sampling Oregon's Commercial Fisheries

In 2023, Oregon's commercial fisheries landed \$177 million of seafood to Oregon ports. Historic and iconic fisheries such as ocean commercial Dungeness crab, Chinook and coho salmon, pink shrimp, and groundfish make up the fabric of Oregon's coastal communities. ODFW is charged with collecting information about these fisheries to manage quotas, assess stock health, and inform future regulation development.

The MRP's Finfish Sampling Project deploys seven year-round port biologists and port samplers and five seasonal samplers to collect biological data on groundfish, hagfish, and albacore tuna fisheries. Commercial landings are sampled in Astoria, Garibaldi, Pacific City, Depoe Bay, Newport, Charleston, Bandon, Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings. This work is funded by federal grants, landings fees (Ad Valorem) and license/permit fees.

Samplers meet vessels when they return from fishing and are delivering catch to a processor or fish buyer. They randomly select samples from over 100 groundfish species, hagfish, and albacore tuna. Port biologists collect length, weight, and sex data, and take age structures, maturity samples, and genetic material as needed. They also evaluate how well landings are sorted by species, as there are different species that look very similar and can get mixed up when sorted. This ensures that overall weights of landings by species or species group are as correct as possible for tracking against quotas.

Data collected by this project are critical to assess the health of important fish stocks. State and federal scientists use the size and age data collected by samplers to inform several components needed to determine the health of a stock and the amount that can be harvested sustainably. This information helps scientists determine stock assessment variables, such as:

- Growth rates: how fast individual fish can grow
- Mortality rates: how many individuals die naturally in a population
- Maturity and fecundity: at what age or size individuals become sexually mature

and how many offspring they can produce

- Unfished stock biomass: how big the population was historically, in the absence of fishing
- Spawning-stock biomass: how big the population of spawning individuals is currently
- Fishing selectivity: at what age or size individuals are being caught by specific fishing gear



Brookings Port Biologist, Valerie Stephens, taking a length of a grass rockfish landed in Port Orford.

The quality of these data impact the ability to develop accurate models that are used to manage fisheries. Components such as current and historical biomass and recommended catch levels are directly impacted by the quality of fishery sampling data. Additionally, some stock assessment methodologies, particularly for stocks that have limited data available, are almost solely dependent on accurate catch and length data.

Sport bottomfish management and public engagement

While managing sport bottomfish on the Oregon coast, the MRP sport bottomfish team engages the public and works to factor public input into setting seasons, bag limits, and other regulations.

With significant changes coming to the sport bottomfish fishery beginning Jan. 1, 2025, the team has been keeping the public informed and involved throughout the 2025 season-setting process. Black rockfish and canary rockfish quota reductions are due to recent stock assessments that showed the population scale of these species is smaller than previously anticipated.

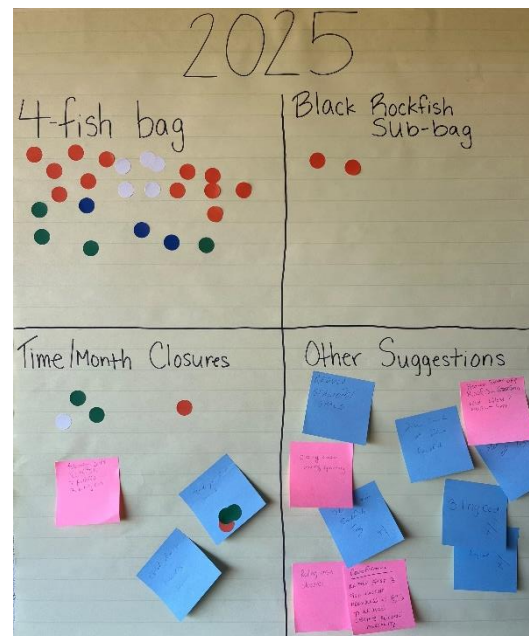
Starting in fall of 2023, staff began outreach to make the public aware of the upcoming changes in 2025 allocations via announcements in a series of public meetings in three Oregon coast ports, one of which was also webcast. Staff talked to anglers about the reductions at the Feb., 2024 Saltwater Sportsmen's Show which is attended by about 1,200 people each year. The team also had a suggestion board for anglers to indicate their preferred solution to the quota reduction or recommend their own solution.

Staff hosted an online meeting with the informal Marine Sportfishing Advisory Committee (SAC) in the spring 2024 to bring the changes to the attention of advisors representing recreational fishing interests throughout the Oregon coast and encourage them to engage with their fishing communities and contacts to get input and suggestions.

Throughout the summer of 2024, the recreational bottomfish staff worked on modeling the various suggestions received from the public for the 2025 season structure and bag limits. In late July and early August, ODFW hosted four public meetings – in Brookings, North Bend, Salem, and Newport (with an online option for the Newport meeting) – to present these results and continue the discussion with private and charter anglers and fishing-related businesses. The meetings were announced via a news release, the website, a list serve email (with about 23,000 contacts), and the NextDoor app. A total of 68 people attended those meetings in person and

online. After the public meetings, staff hosted an online meeting with the SAC to further discuss options for the 2025 season.

Gathering input from private anglers, guides, charter groups, port officials, tackle stores, and Oregon State Police is important when setting up season structure, regulations, and bag limits especially during years of large changes to allocations. ODFW staff then use that input to model different scenarios to maximize opportunity while staying within sustainable harvest levels, keeping in mind the ability to enforce regulations and minimize complexity when making recommendations to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission.



Suggestion board from the 2024 Saltwater Sportsman Show. Anglers indicated their preference of the proposed solutions or provided their own suggestion.

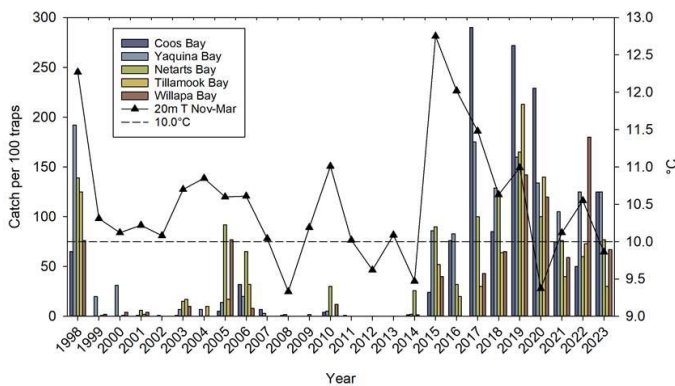


ODFW sport bottomfish project leader Christian Heath presents to a nearly full room at the public meeting in North Bend.

European Green Crab monitoring.

The green crab, *Carcinus maenas*, is native to Europe and invaded Oregon waters in 1997 spreading to the Oregon coast via planktonic larvae travelling in ocean currents. Their west coast range currently extends from California to Alaska.

In Oregon, abundance peaked in warm water conditions (1997 El Niño and the 2015 Marine Heatwave). Since 2015, green crab have been persistently abundant in estuaries; however, adults are rarely found in the open ocean.



Green crab abundance in OR and WA

To track or understand long-term threats posed by green crab, Shellfish Program staff monitor Oregon populations. Long-term monitoring data are needed to document changes to identify actual impacts to crab, clams, and habitats.

Modified traps are used to monitor adult green crab at subtidal sites throughout Yaquina Bay. To track the annual recruitment of green crab,

minnow traps are set in the intertidal zone. All green crab are counted, identified, and measured.



Staff monitor adult green crab at Yaquina Bay subtidal sites.

Findings for Yaquina Bay include:

- Green crab are most abundant mid-bay; river mile 4 – 9;
- CPUE (catch per unit effort) varies widely through both time and space;
- Smaller green crab are found in the upper intertidal as compared to the lower intertidal zone

As a controlled species, it is illegal to release green crab in Oregon. The recreational daily catch limit of green crab is 35. There is no active commercial fishery, due to lack of market interest.

Shellfish staff have performed outreach presentations including video interviews for Oregon Public Broadcasting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nTqHyFfczI>

Staff work with Tribal, federal, state, academic, and agency collaborators to standardize methods and share results. ODFW is engaged to develop the North American Management Plan for European Green Crab and with the Oregon Invasives Species Council to develop the Management Plan for European Green Crab in Oregon.

**End of field reports for
December 13, 2024**