



December 28, 2020

To: Our Fellow Oregonians

Subject: Support for Cape Blanco Rocky Habitat Designation
as a Marine Research Area

The Coos Bay Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation works within the greater Coos County area focusing on a variety of programs, stewardship activities, campaigns and fun events – all for the love of local ocean, waves and beaches. The chapter serves Coos County with the longest running beach water quality monitoring program ([Blue Water Task Force](#)) in the state of Oregon.

We urge you to designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area because:

1. The Oregon coast is “the people’s coast” both now and for countless future generations.
 - a. Our chapter is dedicated to protecting Cape Blanco along with all of Southern Oregon's local beaches, waterways, and engaging the next generation of coastal defenders.
 - b. Marine Research Area designations will not change public access to Cape Blanco.
2. Many of our members recreate near Cape Blanco and along the Southern Oregon coast.
 - a. We surf, sail, swim, hike, kayak, birdwatch, and enjoy other coast activities.
3. We value the diversity of life in the ocean and in near-shore habitats.
 - a. It's more than just ocean and sand and a picture perfect sunset. Whether it's guillemots and cormorants flying overhead, elephant seals securing their domain, pelican birds skirting the surf, scurrying mole crabs and sand fleas, or little hermit crabs, anemones, and sea stars in tidepools – we care about and love our rich coastal ecosystems.
4. With an increase of visitors to the coast, it's important that we have both protected areas and that we have educational areas. Cape Blanco will be used by educators for hands-on learning, and it will be a “learning place” for visitors and the local community.
5. We want to be able to continue enjoying Oregon’s South Coast. Because of climate change, ocean temperature rising, and coral dying, the ocean web-of-life is in danger. It's important that we have places for long-term research, like Cape Blanco, where scientists can continually learn how to protect the near shore Rocky Habitat for critical ocean vitality.
6. Cape Blanco area is prime Rocky Habitat and should be designated as such.
 - a. It supports a very diverse plethora of oceanic species, which makes it important to preserve and protect as it is a priceless ecosystem for marine life, cultural harvest, and for scientists to study now and for countless generations to come.
 - b. Oregon State University has done over 30 years of research at Cape Blanco. Marine Research Area site designation would support their continued work to understand our coastal ecosystems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sam Schwarz".

Sam Schwarz, Chair
Coos Bay Chapter Surfrider Foundation
chair@coosbay.surfrider.org

Letter of support for Marine Research Area designation at Cape Blanco

Dear Rocky Habitat Site Designation Group,

As an interested member of Port Orford and the Oregon Coast community, I am writing to you to urge you to support the proposal put forth by PISCO to designate a portion of Cape Blanco as a Research Reserve. This designation would ensure that while people can still enjoy the natural beauty of the site, no collecting of animals or algae occurs. This will help the ecosystem remain intact for generations of citizens and visitors to come.

The PISCO lab at Oregon State University has been conducting research at this site for over 30 years and has made discoveries that are important for our community to know about, including the identification of Sea Star Wasting Disease in the spring of 2014. As a coastal town, monitoring the health of our marine environments is necessary, and protecting Cape Blanco would provide an area specifically for this purpose.

This area is a precious ecosystem and vital to our coastal community. Please help us protect it. Respectfully with many thanks,

Crystal Roy
Surfrider Foundation
Port Orford, Oregon

December 28, 2020

To: Rocky Habitat Site Designation Group

Subject: Support for Cape Blanco Rocky Habitat Designation as a Marine Research Area

Oregon is a special state, and our Oregon coast is a treasure. I walk along the beach during winter storms when bull kelp is thrown onto shore by the ocean's mighty hand. I tidepool, kayak the bay and along the coast. I pick up litter, on foot and in the kayak. I occasionally crab or fish – but mainly, I go to the edge of the ocean for peace of mind . . . the clean air, the reminder that the ocean has been here – and will be here – for millennia longer than I . . . and I see myself as one living thing in the greater mosaic of life on this planet.

I urge you to designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area because:

1. It is imperative (reasons listed below) to protect this area.
2. We need to scientifically monitor this area to detect both positive and negative changes as they occur over time, because then our state, local, and community leaders will be better able to make informed decisions.

WHY we need to PROTECT Cape Blanco:

- I. The reason why protecting Cape Blanco is so important is * because * it is critical to protecting our whole coast – our fishing communities, recreation opportunities, tourism, and our traditional ways of life.
- II. A small area like Cape Blanco does not exist in isolation.
 - A. The ocean has currents with different temperatures. Nutrients move on these currents. As that happens, ocean life follows those movements.
 - B. Birds, marine mammals, predator and prey fish move closer to, away from, travel north and south along the coast, etc. Species such a salmon and crab spend parts of their lives in different ecosystems.
 - C. Some animal and plant species (residents) stay at Cape Blanco.
- III. Protecting this rich rocky habitats protects the whole Oregon coast.
 - A. The “rich” (= diverse & unique) ecosystems are more valuable in terms of ocean health in the long run – in terms of health and numbers of fish and shellfish.
 - B. Rich ecosystems have a better chance of adapting BECAUSE they are rich.
 1. Why adaptability is important: We currently have climate change, ocean acidification, and a staggering amount of plastic pollution affecting ocean conditions and ocean life. Even if we can slow down these impactors and do remediation, species MUST adapt in order to survive.
 2. Adapting species need TIME to adapt (it takes time).
 3. Adapting species need a PLACE to adapt. That place is their habitat.
 - C. For years, we've experienced declining numbers of salmon, crab, rockfish, and other marine-dependent species. Red tides that have stopped our commercial crabbers. These are signs that our ocean-edge ecosystem is out of balance. Scientific research lets us understand WHY this has been happening and HOW we can respond to fix it.

Scientists have been doing research at Cape Blanco for 30+ years:

- I. 30+ years of research has already been invested, so scientists already know a lot about the Cape Blanco site.
- II. Marine scientists will gather long-term data to understand both the “big picture” patterns and to see changes that could quickly mean a problem for the health of our fish, shellfish, and other ocean life in the area.
 - A. Site designation would allow scientists to have a “long view” of the ebb and flows of changes in ocean life. Sometimes changes are parts of a “natural” pattern, and are normal – there may be less fish this year, but more next year. Other changes may not be normal.
- III. What the marine scientists learn at Cape Blanco will be helpful for other parts of Oregon, the Pacific Coast, and other parts of the world.

How people will benefit:

- I. The more scientists learn from Cape Blanco, the more we will know what to do to have healthier rocky habitats, beaches, estuaries, and healthier fish and shellfish.
- II. Oregonians and visitors to our coast will have a richer beach / shoreline / near shore experience because of diverse, healthy ocean-edge life and ecosystems . . . better tidepooling, ocean kayaking, birdwatching, recreational fishing.
- III. Local Tribal people have lived in close connection with the land and waters around them – it has been part of their way of life and spirituality for thousands of years.
- IV. We can know that we aren’t just doing this for us, but for our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

You should designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area because it is a diverse, rich ecosystem, we need to protect it and learn from it – for our enjoyment, for our small town Oregon economies, and for our ways of life.

I reviewed proposals and participated in community webinars for 4 other southern Oregon Rocky Habitat sites – Coquille Point, Blacklock Point, Rocky Point (rumored withdrawn), and Crook Point. **All of these sites are worthy of Rocky Habitat site designation.** I was not able to submit letters for the other sites due to their earlier deadlines, but I would have written a letter of support for each one. **Each is a unique habitat, and is important for the long-term the health of our Oregon coast and coastal communities.**

Sincerely,



Jean Cassidy
1440 Butler Road, Coos Bay, OR 97420
541-521-4249



KALMIOPSIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1265 • Port Orford OR • 97465

Dec. 20, 2020

To: Rocky Habitat Working Group

From: Kalmiopsis Audubon Society

Re: Support for increased protections for rocky intertidal sites on the South Coast

Greetings:

I am writing on behalf of the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, based in Curry County, on Oregon's South Coast. Our group has about 400 local members who care about conserving habitat for birds, fish, and wildlife. Our members enjoy birdwatching and other outdoor nature study based on unique plants and animals in our local ecosystems, including our rocky shorelines.

We support the State of Oregon's strategy of marine zoning to assure that areas with the highest natural values for marine life can be protected and conserved while other areas may incur greater use—rather than allowing for incremental degradation everywhere. We also strongly support the Rocky Shores Strategy goal: "To protect the ecological values and coastal biodiversity within and among Oregon's rocky shores while allowing appropriate use."

Our members have long participated in Black Oystercatcher surveys, and so we know that rocky shorelines of Oregon's South Coast host some of the richest and most important habitat for this beloved bird, an Oregon species-of-concern. Black Oystercatchers rely almost exclusively on rocky intertidal habitats to forage, as do our Black and Ruddy Turnstones and Surfbirds. Many of our offshore rocks (part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge system) also host rocky intertidal habitat important for these shorebirds. They also host some of the largest seabird nesting colonies in Oregon. Clean cold water and upwelling make our ocean areas especially productive, and while these nesting seabirds generally forage on small fishes, the structure of rocky intertidal habitat, including algae and invertebrate life, are important for larger marine food webs that support birds, fish, and even whales. In addition, we are aware that our most remote shorelines host remarkable seaweed biodiversity, something that calls out for more study and seems particularly important at this time when changing ocean conditions have significantly impacted some species of marine algae. Many of these algal species have little known life histories.

Because southern Oregon is an ecological transition zone between rocky shore invertebrate species communities from California ecosystems and those of the Pacific Northwest, there is highly valuable biodiversity in the intertidal zones in our local area.

In recent years, especially in this past pandemic year, we've noticed increased visitation to a number of formerly remote and little-known shoreline areas. As a result, in some places, we've seen new paths opened up, and an increase in plastic trash and human waste. Some of our members have reported removal of marine life, including mussels and seaweeds, and online videos specifically encouraging people to forage for limpets in still rich intertidal areas of the South Coast! We are aware that rocky shore habitats not far north up the coast have already been degraded by overuse and so we are concerned that these habitats on the south coast could become vulnerable.

In addition, Oregon's marine life is already confronting some of the perils of the climate crisis, with the collapse of kelp forests in many areas. Our members have reported seeing invertebrates from deeper waters, in particular purple urchins and red and flat abalone, now up in shallower areas, seeking out food. In the intertidal zone. As a result, these animals are far more vulnerable to take by humans. And these are the kinds of animals that people notice. There may well be other marine invertebrates now at higher risk owing to changing ocean conditions.

To help protect our still-rich and unique marine ecosystems, we support designation for several key areas on the South Coast for greater conservation in the Oregon Rocky Habitat Management Strategy. In general, it seems that areas that already have protection of upland terrestrial habitats should merit strong consideration for rocky shores protection, too.

That said, we also have concerns that special designation could inadvertently draw greater attention, increased visitation, and more damaging uses to now remote and little-known areas. We urge you to carefully weigh the best practices and methods for conservation of these valuable marine resources, especially given that there now seems to be insufficient capacity for enforcement of rules our South Coast area—something we have seen with seasonal closures for western snowy plovers and other state laws. This has been especially pronounced in this pandemic year with so many state parks understaffed. We urge you to draw upon knowledge of other places, perhaps from north up the coast or from natural resource professionals with experience in other vulnerable marine environments, to inform the best approaches for proactively conserving outstanding rocky shores values on Oregon's South Coast.

The most effective approach may be to actively direct visitors to "marine gardens" where tide pools or unique rocky habitat are most accessible rather than to highlight more remote, significant and pristine areas, as might happen with special designations marked on a map.

We recognize that this Rocky Shores Management Strategy public process is focused on designation of zones, but we appreciate some other important approaches to conservation of rocky intertidal areas that we urge the State to adopt together with designations. For example, we appreciate that Oregon has worked with NGO partners and has invested in providing for education and interpretation at some high use areas with vulnerable intertidal habitats; this

approach may be invaluable not only for conserving those sites in particular but for others as well. And of course, having more state park rangers to patrol, talk to visitors, and keep an eye on rocky habitat areas at state parks, would also be very helpful to protecting our intertidal zones.

Proposals

To help protect our still-rich and unique marine ecosystems, we support designation, we support the following designations:

Blacklock Point area as a Marine Conservation Area

Our group has long been engaged with efforts to conserve the upland areas adjacent to the rocky shores of Blacklock Point, known as Floras Lake State Natural Area, a unique wild Oregon State Park that residents and visitors enjoy for its wildness, stunning views, unique ecological attributes—including highly unusual botany related to distinctive geology. The adjacent rocky shore and offshore areas are also unique, owing to unusual sandstone geology --with diverse rocky intertidal habitats, subtidal rocky reefs, kelp beds, and seabird colonies. Blacklock Point has been part of our Christmas Bird Count for 40 years, and is a place where people can observe many species of seabirds in a remote setting, since it takes a good walk to reach overlook points and intertidal zones. Marine Mammals also use this area. In a 2005 report, the group Oceana recognized Blacklock Point as one of 31 Important Ecological Areas in Oregon. The current land use as a State Natural area is compatible with conservation, but there are areas where vandalism has occurred, for example on sand stone cliff walls north of the point. There has also been an increase in visitation to this remote area. We support the South Coast Rocky Shores Group proposal to designate Blacklock Point as a Marine Conservation Area.

Crook Point area as a Marine Conservation Area

In the past, our group has engaged with efforts to conserve the seabird colonies adjacent to the rocky shores of Crook Point. Crook Point, including the Crook Point Unit of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge is located south of Pistol River State Park. Because the NWR is closed to the public and much of the south part of point is privately owned, access to the intertidal zone in this area is already constrained. It takes walking in from Pistol River State park more than one-half mile on a steep narrow beach (constrained by beach grass) —and then trespassing beyond closure signs —to reach this remote area, or obtaining special permission from the National Wildlife Refuge or private landowners.

For this reason, the rocky shores of Crook Point may host pristine and “reference quality” intertidal habitats. From what we understand, the areas has a high concentration of diverse intertidal habitat types. Also the area from here south to the north end of Boardman State Park hosts high marine algae biodiversity. In addition, the nearshore rocks here have hosted some of the most significant colonies of Leach’s Storm petrels on the West Coast, and is recognized as an Important Bird Area. Marine mammals are also known to haul out here. In a 2005 report, the group Oceana recognized Crook Point as one of 31 Important Ecological Areas in Oregon.

The current upland uses of Crook Point are generally compatible with conservation of outstanding intertidal natural resources, but potential future development could put these values at high risk. We hope that MCA designation could help protect these resources into the future if it could help to require positive mitigation measures to avoid polluted runoff that

would degrade and damage marine life. Ideally, this designation would not antagonize private property owners whose current land management is compatible with the high conservation values of the rocky intertidal zone; hopefully they will continue to derive benefit from hosting visitors who cherish the unique opportunity to access this remarkable and hard to reach rocky shore and beach area. We support the South Coast Rocky Shores Group proposal to designate Crook Point as a Marine Conservation Area.

Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Reserve

The intertidal zone around Cape Blanco is also extraordinary. One of the westernmost points in the lower 48 states, Cape Blanco is an important geographic and topographic feature in our region —jutting out into the ocean so as to structure and demarcate populations of salmon and steelhead. Our members have enjoyed low tide field trips to explore this area with marine biologists —learning about some of the remarkable and beautiful denizens of its intertidal zone. This rocky shore area is adjacent to the beloved Cape Blanco State Park, famous for its lighthouse, and so it is subject to greater visitation and potential impacts than other areas.

Cape Blanco has been the location of an important PISCO research site for over 30 years. Ongoing monitoring here helped scientists to recognize early on the sea star wasting disease that became so consequential for the entire West Coast.

We support PISCO's proposal to designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Reserve. This designation would help ensure that people can continue to enjoy the remarkable natural beauty of the site, but would preclude collecting of animals or algae. This will help the ecosystem remain intact for generations of citizens and visitors to come.

We appreciate the State of Oregon's proactive approach to marine conservation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public input, and we look forward to learning more about this public process as it moves forward.

Sincerely,



Ann Vileisis
President Kalmiopsis Audubon Society

Todd D. Buchholz
1440 Butler Road
Coos Bay, OR. 97420

December 29, 2020

I write to urge you to designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area because:

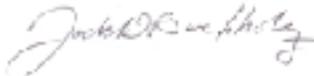
As a retired Fisheries Scientist, I know a 30+ year data set is invaluable for informed decision making. Climate change is real, and the effects to our ocean environment is evident today. The research being conducted at Cape Blanco will continue to provide us with tools to best address climate change in these critical near-shore areas.

The South Coast is expected to see more and more visitors in the coming years. Tide pools and near-shore rocky habitats are a major draw for our guests. Too many people can have very detrimental impacts to these sensitive areas. Designating Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area will provide another layer of protection for this amazing resource.

I have lived, worked and recreated in Oregon my entire life. We Oregonians are first in the nation for protecting our beautiful and amazing landscapes for the benefit of all, and for future generations. This is the Oregon Way!

Thank you for all your time and energy being a champion for our beautiful coast and its fantastic animal life, lovely vistas and public access.

Please keep doing it, the Oregon Way!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Todd D. Buchholz".

Todd D. Buchholz



Bruce Menge
Wayne and Gladys Professor of Marine Biology
OSU Distinguished Professor of Integrative Biology
Oregon State University, 3029 Cordley Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2914
T 541-737-5358 | F 541-737-3360 | <http://zoology.science.oregonstate.edu>

December 31, 2020

To: Rocky Habitat Working Group
From: Dr. Bruce A. Menge, Oregon State University

Re: Support for a Marine Research Area at Cape Blanco

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of myself, my lab at Oregon State University, and The Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO) in support of the proposal to protect Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area. My laboratory group and I have been doing research at Cape Blanco and other sites in the Port Orford area for about 25 years. Our goal has been to amass data sets that will enable a determination of if, and how these coastal ecosystems are responding to climate change. Research conducted has included many experiments and observational studies as well as continuous monitoring of the ecosystems in this area. Recent analyses show that despite the appearance of long-term stability, the system has become increasingly unstable and may be nearing a tipping point into a different configuration.

Protecting Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area will allow us to continue this important work for many years to come. The proposed designation would ensure that while people can still enjoy the natural beauty of the site, no collecting of animals or algae can occur. This will help the ecosystem remain intact for future generations of scientists, citizens, and visitors and ensure that our long-term monitoring can be maintained with integrity.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Menge".

Bruce Menge

31 December, 2020

Dear Reviewers of Rocky Habitat Site Designation proposals:

I am writing in strong support of the proposed Marine Research Area designation for Cape Blanco by PISCO – the Partnership for Interdisciplinary Study of Coastal Oceans. I have been following the development of this proposal and can attest to its scientific merit, balance, and thoroughness, as well as support of this proposal by local individuals and communities here on the southern Oregon coast.

Cape Blanco is an oceanographically dynamic, key location for several reasons, including that it serves as a marine biogeographic transition area, demarking the northern- or southern-most extent of the geographic range of many marine intertidal plants and animals. The rocky habitats around the cape also serve as important shelter, resting, haul out, nesting, recruitment, or nursery areas and sources of prey food for many species, from seaweeds to sea lions, including species that are commercially harvested or of particular resource management concern.

The site designation proposal advanced by PISCO strikes a very fine balance between protecting marine resources and continuing to allow human uses, without impacting longterm research activities at this key sentinel site on the Oregon coast.

Further, nearshore rocky habitats, their occupants and resources, at least on the northern side of the cape are subject to episodic threats and impacts from erosion, sedimentation, and runoff of soils from land clearing actions in the adjacent upper watershed of the Sixes River; fine sediment fractions of this soil enter the nearshore ocean as dense plumes and eventually settle to the sea floor, causing sublethal and lethal effects on rocky habitat flora and fauna including already severely impacted canopy forming kelps and kelp forests. This issue deserves priority attention by state agencies for research to provide science-based information for restoration and management of these rich, critical habitats and resources.

There is a considerable history of marine research at and near Cape Blanco. PISCO has been conducting periodic sampling for decades as part of long term ecological monitoring of the rocky intertidal there. This and related research by the Menge-Lubchenco lab at Oregon State University, and others, is key to understanding the status, trends and dynamics of rocky intertidal ecosystems and their oceanographic drivers, as well as how these dynamics are changing under the influence of changing ocean-climate conditions. It is essential that Cape Blanco and other places with long time series data sets be protected so that we are able to continue to monitor, predict trends in, and adaptively manage rocky intertidal communities with ecosystem-based approaches, in places without undo direct human influences.

Colleagues and I are still attempting to ascertain why this region – the Curry and Coos county coasts -- was the last on the entire Pacific coast of North America to experience the effects of the Sea Star Wasting Syndrome marine epidemic that decimated populations of over 20 species of intertidal and subtidal sea stars, in particular the sunflower star, *Pycnopodia helianthoides*,

and whether conditions in this region might have interacted to serve as some type of partial refuge from this epidemic. *Pycnopodia* was recently (early December 2020) listed as critically endangered globally by the IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The effects of these sea star population crashes are still playing out in nearshore rocky habitats with some unknown consequences. However we suspect that Cape Blanco and its influences on regional oceanography may provide clues about why this marine epidemic was so late arriving in this region.

I first visited Cape Blanco as a 12 year old boy with my family. The rocky intertidal here left a permanent impression on me. I worked one summer as a seasonal park ranger at Cape Blanco and other south coast state parks in the Cape Blanco Management Unit. I have also participated in the development and implementation of longterm ecological monitoring of rocky intertidal, kelp forest, and other marine benthic communities. This includes efforts that were formative in the development of the ongoing National Park Service, Limpets, OPIHI, MARINe, and PISCO rocky intertidal monitoring programs. Starting in the early 1980s I took part in surveys of rocky intertidal and subtidal habitats and species, particularly canopy forming kelps, kelp forests, urchin barrens, sea urchin and abalone populations at over thirty sites along the Pacific coast of North America, from northern Baja California, Mexico, to Puget Sound, Washington. This includes rocky intertidal and kelp forest dive surveys around Cape Blanco and offshore islands and other promontories and rocky habitats on the south coast. I continue to dive and free dive around the cape and other rocky coasts when conditions allow. I also continue to maintain non-extractive/non-impact long-term monitoring of sea stars and other species. Since 1993 I have taught university level and public education field courses and continue to lead intertidal field trips for area school and community groups at Cape Blanco and other nearby rocky habitats, which are an invaluable living laboratory and field classroom. It is imperative that Cape Blanco rocky habitats receive the protections afforded by the proposed Marine Research Area designation.

I strongly encourage your consideration of the proposal by PISCO to designate Cape Blanco as a Marine Research Area under the Oregon Rocky Habitat Management Strategy.

Sincerely,

Larry Basch, Ph.D.
Research Associate (courtesy appointment),
University of Oregon, Oregon Institute of Marine Biology
Charleston, Coos County, Oregon
lbasch@uoregon.edu