



Graphic by Sioux Anderson

Overfishing, habitat loss blamed for salmon slump

Harbor seals are not responsible for decline of salmon fishery yields in the Pacific Northwest, Greenpeace Foundation representative Steve Gilbert said at an Ocean Symposium Wednesday.

Overfishing and the destruction of freshwater salmon habitats are primarily responsible for the decline, but the harbor seal provides a convenient scapegoat for embittered salmon fishermen, Gilbert said.

"Over the years, the harbor seal has been regarded as the coyote of the Oregon coast."

Gilbert called the image of a voracious salmon-eating harbor seal one of "many myths" that grew out of the long conflict of interests between fishermen and harbor seals.

Gilbert also cited recent studies that claim salmon are only about 10 percent of a harbor seal's diet. The other 90 percent consists of less prized fish, such as hake and pollack, he said.

However, harbor seals have paid a high price for this mistaken image, Gilbert said.

Approximately 12,000 harbor seals lived off the Oregon and California coast in 1925, but by the early 1950's bounty hunting reduced the

numbers to 1,000-2,000, he said. Since the prohibition of bounty hunting and the enactment of the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act, the harbor seal population has increased to about 4,000, he said.

Now the modest gains in the last decade of harbor seal populations are threatened by powerful industries who would like to "gut conservation and environmental acts passed in the 1960's, Gilbert said.

"I feel this conflict between the harbor seals and the fishermen is being used as a spearhead to weaken the Marine Mammal Protection Act — to open up other mammals for fishing exploitation."

Oil companies that want to drill for oil off the Oregon and California shoreline want the MMPA weakened or eliminated so they can operate without fear of damaging marine mammal stocks, Gilbert said.

"If industry can get the Marine Mammal Protection Act, it would be another feather in their cap, and kind of a good way for them to start off the 80s."

Board plans for budget cut

A plan to cope with a possible 10-percent cut in funding of state colleges and universities will be considered today by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education.

If approved, the plan would be presented to the Legislature's Ways and Means Committee.

The board earlier developed a proposal for handling cuts proposed by Gov. Vic Atiyeh. The plan now being presented by Chancellor Roy Lieuallen is for possible further reductions in higher education funding.

If the system has to accept these cuts, it will mean an additional \$3.7 million reduction in

University funding, says acting University Pres. Paul Olum. All together the University would lose \$5 million and a reduction of "a couple thousand students" and corresponding staff and faculty, he says.

Not only students and faculty would be eliminated, Olum says. To make ends meet after a 10-percent reduction, "we would cut whole programs. We would cut whole schools."

Across-the-board cuts would "destroy quality uniformly," he said. Chopping individual schools and programs, would leave the remaining programs' quality intact.

"Those cuts would devastate the University. You'd have to declare financial exigency. Many of our best people would leave."

But Olum is leery of talking about possible consequences. "This kind of thing always begins to constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Also on the state board's agenda is discussion of tuition options for Atiyeh's proposed 15-percent tuition increase for each of the next two years. The board also will hear Jeff Lee, Executive Director of the State Scholarship Commission, speak on financial aid.

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(RESIDENT ASSISTANT)

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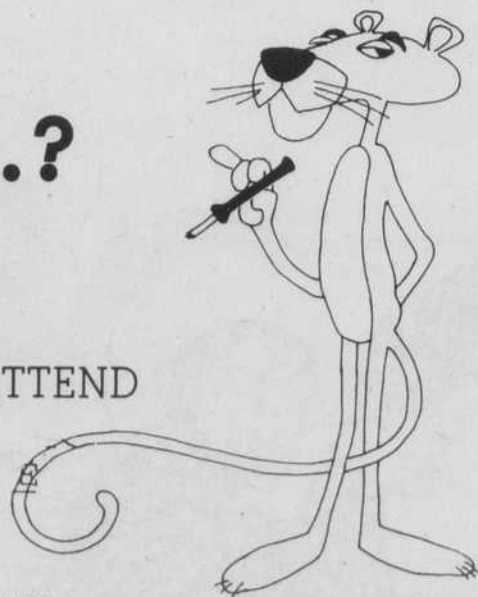
APPLICANTS REQUIRED TO ATTEND

ONE OF THESE MEETINGS:

Tues. March 3 University Inn
Main Lounge 7 pm

Wed. March 4 Sheldon Hall Lounge 7 pm

Thurs. March 5 Bean West
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