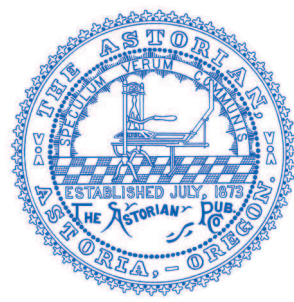


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Coast's 'charmed' economy is a double-edged sword

Two state economists delivered a sterling presentation last week at the Columbia Forum that painted a clear picture of the double-edge sword we face — the attraction and charm of the North Coast and the economic challenges.

The two, Erik Knoder, who provides economic data for four coastal counties including Clatsop, and Josh Lehner, from the state Office of Economic Analysis, explained how our proximity to Portland is both an economic help and hindrance.

The county's average income is better than two-thirds of rural counties in the U.S., but nationwide only 2 percent of rural counties have more expensive homes. As Lehner said, "There's only so much coastline in America" where people can live. About one-quarter of North Coast residences are classified as second homes, fueling our housing crunch. The crunch is amplified by building rates 40 percent below the early 2000s because wage levels prevent potential buyers from obtaining financing.

Both economists noted Clatsop County is closer in economic performance to Portland and far ahead of other rural areas in recovery from the Great Recession. The other edge of the sword, though, is that while we're experiencing job, wage and population growth, those upticks are in lower-wage positions largely in hospitality, leisure and retail. Job losses are occurring in middle-wage manufacturing and office support positions, mirroring the disturbing nationwide trend of a shrinking middle class.

Population growth has mostly been retirees and late-career professionals, while younger age groups have migrated to urban areas with higher wages.

And after eight years of nationwide economic expansion, at some point there'll be another recession, as their always is, Lehner said.

So what does it mean?

For a while, at least, we can expect economic growth. But the same challenges will exist without further upward shifts in wages and job types. That in turn shows the strategic need for sound planning and economic diversification.

Local leaders need to pursue those goals while also working to retain the full essence of the region's charm and roots. It's a challenge, but it can be overcome.

Cascadia's potential effects serve as yet another wakeup call

Eastern Oregonians may not even notice it if it happens. A low rumble may be all they feel of what would be the most destructive natural disaster in this country's history.

Cascadia — a massive earthquake off the Pacific coast registering above 8.0 on the Richter scale.

The quake itself would likely leave a disaster zone hundreds of miles wide. Thousands of people would be dead or missing. The Oregon Coast may well be left unrecognizable. Everything west of Interstate 5 in Oregon and Washington state would be damaged. For those who could get out of nature's way, our evacuation-zone options would include Eastern Oregon.

As we learned in a five-part series published this past week in The Daily Astorian, short-term effects in Eastern Oregon would not be immediately catastrophic. But power and cellular service would be severely effected. Gasoline and groceries would become scarce, especially with the influx of evacuees.

Coastal evacuees would say other areas got off easy, but the severe impact would be felt throughout the Northwest for at least a generation.

Hundreds of thousands — if not millions — would be homeless. The Northwest's economic hubs would be devastated. The influx of evacuees to safe zones would be enormous.

The series, written by Jade McDowell and initially reported in our sister paper, the East Oregonian, serves as another wakeup call for emergency preparedness, even in zones presumed safe. While we cannot rely on a specific Cascadia reality, we must try to mitigate its potential effects.

Government can't make all potentially needed investments in preparedness at a time when the state budget is already trying to climb out of its own sinkhole.

What we can depend on, though, is ourselves.

We can learn lessons from Minamisoma, New Orleans and San Francisco. We can be personally prepared. We should talk with our loved ones about emergency preparation, evacuation options and communication plans. We should keep an emergency food and a water supply, and include flashlights, candles and emergency radios.

Even if the "big one" doesn't shake in our lifetimes, lesser emergencies will come our way.

We can be ready, come what may.



SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Submitted Photo
 Cape Falcon
 Marine Reserves.

Feeling 'blue' at Falcon Cove Marine Reserve

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

During a late February presentation, Jane Lubchenco, a distinguished professor in the Oregon State University College of Science, shared lessons about ways "to use the ocean without using it up."



In her presentation, the professor pointed out that achieving the long-term potential of blue growth — sustainable management of our oceans — will require aligning short- and long-term economic incentives to achieve a diverse mix of benefits.

"Blue growth refers to long-term strategies for supporting sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole," she said.

That philosophy is to be seen in the designation of the Cape Falcon Marine Preserve, which celebrated its first birthday a little over one year ago.

At 12.4 square miles, Cape Falcon, along the coast from Manzanita to Falcon Cove, is the second largest of Oregon's five marine reserves, where ocean development and removal of sea life are prohibited.

"They mean no take, no development, no ocean animal or plant can be removed, and nothing can be developed there without a scientific permit," Friends of Cape Falcon Reserve Coordinator Chrissy Smith said this month. "Cape Falcon unites land and marine conservation."

The reserve is located in the ocean just off the northern coast between Falcon Cove and Manzanita. Cape Falcon is one of five marine reserves in the state — Cascade Head, Otter Rock, Cape Perpetua and Redfish Rock are the others.

A tide change?

A month after its debut, Cape Falcon played host to a statewide summit, with experts weighing in on our changing ocean habitat. More than 80 state agencies, wildlife and conservation groups, professors, volunteers and civic leaders joined in "A Tide Change: Inspiring Engagement in Oregon's Marine Reserves."

As director of the Science of Marine Reserves Project at Oregon State University, Kirsten Grorud-Colvert presented evidence that within 124 marine reserves the mass of animals and plants increased 446 percent on average after protections, the number of animals and plants in an area increased 166 percent, animals' body sizes increased 28 percent and the number of species increased 21 percent. Heavily fished species increased most dramatically.

Anne Nelson, of the Marine Protected Areas Center, a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S.



Submitted Photo

Jane Lubchenco, a distinguished professor in the Oregon State University College of Science, seeks to "use the oceans without using them up."

Department of the Interior, encouraged the growth of "sustainable tourism."

"We have this unbelievably beautiful resource that people want to see," Nelson said. "How can we let people in, but still make sure areas are protected?"

Avian Conservation Manager Joe Liebezeit of the Audubon Society of Portland heralded the diverse bird population which could benefit from marine protections.

A community volunteer at Newport's Otter Rock, Karen Driscoll, said Cape Falcon was "outstanding" because of its diversity, with "something of everything: grasslands, forest, rocky headwater."

Could Cape Falcon fulfill its goals without compromising an economy dedicated to tourism?

Fishing impact

Ten years ago, fishermen were concerned about the impact of placing land off-limits to fishing in protected areas.

"There are areas there that haven't been touched with any kind of gear," a commercial trawler said at a hearing reported in The Daily Astorian in 2008. "For them to say we need more area to study seems like a back door approach to adding more restrictions."

Today, Cape Falcon Marine Reserve is off-limits to fishing up to the low tide line and all rocky intertidal areas in the marine reserve are protected. "Fishermen are respecting that rule," Smith said.

Tamara Mautner, owner of Garibaldi Deep Sea Fishing, brings deep-sea fishing enthusiasts up the North Coast.

Cape Falcon Marine Reserve has "not really had a whole lot of effect in terms of taking away our fishing grounds," Mautner said. Fishermen were more impacted by restrictions at reserves along the central and southern coasts, Mautner said. Cape Falcon's designation did take away "a couple of places we like to fish

sometimes, but nothing that's our main bread and butter."

"If it helps people feel they're doing something good, that's great," Mautner said. "We all want there to be a lot of fish out there — us maybe more than anybody, because we depend on it. The main thing that's happening right now is we're trying to make sure our fishing grounds don't get taken away any further than they have been."

Connected to the reserve are two 7.6-mile marine protected areas, where some fishing activities are allowed.

Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Court Carrier said he had seen "no push-back" from visitors seeking to fish North Coast waters.

"If we had more of a diversified economy, and we had a lot of fishing boats or a marina, we'd hear about it a lot," Carrier said. "I don't think it's impacting people's ability to make a living out there on the ocean."

Tourist attraction

As early as 2009, then chamber director Jeffrey Jewel labeled ecotourism "one of the big boom businesses of the future."

In a spring 2015 presentation to the Cannon Beach City Council, Friends of the Cape Falcon Reserve volunteer chairwoman Nadia Gardner called ecotourism a "burgeoning market."

"We'll see if we will get charter boats or ecotourism," Gardner said. "I'd love that."

"It's one of our missions for the chamber of commerce and our marketing committee to implement sustainable travel as part of our mantra," Carrier said last week. "How do we make that connection to the visitor? I think it's a good thing, but as far as a direct connect right now, it remains to be seen."

More than 700,000 visitors visited Short Sands Beach last year, Cape Falcon coordinator Smith said.

"The ocean's big and when you parcel off a portion, without much effort, a marine reserve will become a destination location," she said. "Our stance is to encourage it, but to encourage people to be conservation-minded while they're here. We're trying to take the stance: 'Please come visit, but let's talk about the consequences of our choices and actions.'"

Smith said she foresees speakers' programs, interpretative guides, hikes and even a boat tour.

"We really just want people to be aware it's there," Smith said. "It's such a new marine reserve. A lot of people come and they're not aware it's there. We want them to understand know it's something Oregon is doing."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.