

**Oregon Solutions Project
Charleston Coast and Ocean Center
Meeting Notes – April 8, 2008**

The meeting started at 2:10 pm, April 8, 2008.

After introductory remarks by co-conveners Oregon Senator Joanne Verger and Representative Arnie Roblan, everyone introduced themselves. A set of ground rules was presented for discussion. There were no objections to the ground rules.

OS Project Manager Steve Bryant described Oregon Solutions. It is an outcome of the Governor's initiatives to help rural communities and counties solve problems by appointing staff to help bring community stakeholders together to discuss ideas and solutions to problems and to develop a declaration of cooperation. There have been 30-40 Oregon Solutions projects, including the North Bend airport terminal. The legislature has supported another 30-40. This project for a multi-organization facility in Charleston was assessed and designated an Oregon Solutions project by the Governor. Now it is up to the stakeholders to develop a time frame and collaborative vision that should result in a declaration of cooperation over the course of about 3-6 meetings. The declaration may identify other steps that need to be continued.

Each member was given an opportunity to articulate his organization's vision of the project and describe how the organization might contribute and benefit.

Craig Young of the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology pointed out how much OIMB depends on the community and other agencies to function, and the vision for this project has to do with interdependencies among the various agencies. OIMB occupies a large amount of land in Charleston and would like to play a greater role in the community. OIMB would benefit from a joint facility because: 1) A permanent public display would be less work than creating a new one each year. 2) OIMB gets many requests to do educational tours and the public display would provide an educational experience for kids. 3) OIMB is very involved in science education in the community and in forming partnerships to further marine science. This project could help that goal and create a synergy with others doing the same.

Mike Graybill said South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve have served the purpose of coastal research and education for 30 years. The administrative offices are now located at the visitor center on Seven Devil's Road, within a rich natural environment but less convenient for administration. Because South Slough works closely with other organizations, a centralized facility would serve the public better. Mike also spoke of a long-standing plan to create a central node for a coastal learning network. The proposed facility would serve this function well.

Mike Gaul of the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay said that part of the port's charge is to support development of a strong, stable economy, and they would like to be involved in exactly this type of partnership. Last year they completed a five-year plan for

Charleston with input from the community. The community wants to see increased tourism and jobs.

Steve Denney said ODFW owns its building in Charleston, but not the land. With 20 employees they are bursting at the seams and have been looking for another location for some time. They serve the fishing fleet, and also have marine and freshwater programs, strong education programs, and are developing new conservation strategies. ODFW's goals marry well with those of the other agencies.

Tim Miller-Morgan said Sea Grant has a presence in this area and could increase and expand its educational outreach. Sea Grant is involved in sustainability and economic development of coastal communities. It is very supportive of the project.

Preson Phillips of OPRD (Sunset Bay State Park) said that interpretation and support of environmental education and outdoor awareness is an important part of the organization. They have a small interpretive center with a staff member. Coastal parks such as Sunset Bay and Shore Acres are destinations for over a million tourists, local citizens, lost drivers, and return visitors each year. They are unsure of what part they would play in this project. He notes from personal standpoint that while the area offers many recreational opportunities, Charleston lacks a focus.

Captain Lance Benton said the US Coast Guard is here to stay and will continue to be the primary maritime emergency responder. Their interest is in anything on the water. The Coast Guard interacts with the public in general with open houses at various coast guard stations and search and rescue demonstrations at events.

David Ford of Charleston Community Enhancement supports anything that would make Charleston a better place to live. While 300,000 cars drive through Charleston, they often drive right through. He would like to see an identity and more things to help employment while retaining the fishing village atmosphere.

Rusty Shield of the Charleston Merchant Association would like to see more people drawn to the area and stopping off the main road. It is hard to get businesses to come to Charleston because it is off the beaten path. They advertise statewide and nationally and get people from all over the world. A small group are doing most of the events work, and there is some burnout.

Coos County Commissioner Niki Whitty pointed out that Charleston is unincorporated. It is very self-sufficient and asks for little. The project sounds terrific and could have even more of a marine focus.

Ron Kreskey from Congressman Peter DeFazio's office and Betsy Boyd, UO Federal Affairs Director, also briefly expressed positive interest in the project.

Craig Young did a presentation on the The Charleston Marine Life Center, a project already underway that will replace OIMB's public display. Grants and funding have been obtained to begin the project. Plans for the two-story building include office space,

a fisheries exhibit overlooking the marina and Pacific Seafood's loading dock, an orca whale skeleton, touch tank, interactive 3-D area map and aquaria.

Discussion ensued about the impact of the Charleston Marine Life Center on the whole project. It was decided to label it Phase I of this Oregon Solutions project. Craig Young had obtained funding for it before the Oregon Solutions project came about and has an obligation to the sponsors to commence building. It will bring visitors into the town and start the work on education and displays. The goal is to have it ready by the Charleston Seafood Festival next summer. Some of the displays, such as the topographical model, can be moved into the new facility when it is built. It should be a premise that it is part of the goal and not the final product.

There was discussion of what should drive the facility, currently known needs or a broader vision of future possibilities as human involvement with the ocean expands. It should be built smart enough to accommodate current needs with the flexibility for the future, such as building two conference rooms, one of which could be converted later to offices if needed. While thinking big and planning for future needs, the plan has to be realistic. Bringing in controversial topics could kill the project.

Discussion of who should be invited to attend or asked to provide input was discussed. The Confederated Tribes of The Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians will be invited. They have the base at Coos Head and are required to get the community involved. The Coquille Tribe has already been involved with funding Phase I. The Charleston Marine Advisory Committee was mentioned. Ties with the Charleston Visitor Center was discussed. The Charleston Visitor Center opens May 1 and is staffed by volunteers. They have a very favorable lease. SOLV, the organization that cleans up the beaches was mentioned. Shoreline Education for Awareness has already offered their support. Charter boat company input could be requested.

Suggestions and ideas:

The location could be jump-off point for environmental tours and boat rides. Charter boating could benefit.

In addition to living animals, the focus could also be on broader perspectives of coastal lifestyles and how we interact with the ocean. Coast guard rescues, shipping in the bay, resource management, improvements in boating safety, and other issues could be brought into the project.

Charleston has requests for community gathering spaces, instructional activity and demonstration spaces.

One idea is to have big deck.

Views important. Is there way to connect view points to one another?

Picnic areas and fire pits that overlook the area.

Hone in on properties. There are only a few places to choose from. BLM may have surplus property.

Naming the project is important. Maybe the vision statement should come first.

We need footprint of what the project is going to be. The port is pretty good at getting federal grants. This project will need a lot of state and federal support. There will need to be an agreement on how to operate and maintain the facilities.

Invite the Coos Confederated Tribes and Coquille representatives.
Architectural design is important. It must be attractive and fit the surroundings.
We have to be realistic about what the visitor base will be. The public is not expected to maintain this facility. Aquaria projects that charge visitors have run into trouble overestimating the amount of visitors.
Different agencies can use for the facility for office space and for displays. Displays could be done without too much space and still be interesting. Different displays could be rotated throughout the year.
Wind blocking would be good if there is outdoor event space.
This could be not just for office space but where people come to get information.
Overbuilding often occurs when visitors are expected to pay.
Invite Coastal Caucus to convene in Charleston.
Use opening of Phase I as groundbreaking.
Important to show that it is more economical to build one facility than separate buildings for the different organizations.

Agenda Ideas:

Review of port master plan.
Begin and review project vision statement.
Update on Phase I project.
Report from the tribes on related activities.
Review property map and ownerships.
Review vision and space needs.
Look at similar facilities.

Tasks:

Task: Check for accuracy and completeness of names and information on the invitation list. Add names and information for alternate attendees.
Task: Mike Graybill to provide Steve Bryant with contact names to invite the tribes to next meeting.
Task: Suggest others who perhaps should be part of the discussion.
Task: Talk to your organizations about what they want and the scope of need to help crystallize the project vision. How big of a display area is needed. What do you need and what would you like? Each party to send current and future space needs within the facility to Steve Bryant. Assessment can be done after receiving the pieces.
Task: Niki Whitty to provide area map and send to Craig Young and copy to Steve Bryant.
Task: Steve Rumrill to get contact information to Steve Bryant for coastal multi-agency marine related visitor centers.

Next meeting will be held before May 8, avoiding Wednesday. Steve Bryant will email possible dates.

The meeting ended at 5:00 pm.