Building Partnerships for Oregon's Coastal Watershed

Project Location

South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, Oregon

Project Lead

Craig Cornu, South Slough Reserve
craig.cornu@state.or.us

Targeted End Users and Products

- *Project final report*
- *Community vision statement*
- *Watershed assessments*
- *South Slough NERR Monitoring Data*
- *Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems Visualization System Data Explorer*
- *Coos Bay Hydrodynamic Model*

Project Partners

- *South Slough Reserve*
- *City of Coos Bay*
- *City of North Bend*
- *Coos County*
- *Coos Watershed Association*
- *Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development*
- *Partnership for Coastal Watersheds*
- *University of Oregon*

About the Science Collaborative
The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's Science Collaborative supports collaborative research that addresses coastal management problems important to the reserves. Learn more at *www.nerrs.noaa.gov.*

Overview

In Oregon's Coos Bay, the natural environment is a source of pride and significant economic activity. But as a result of competing interests, the area's natural resources can also be a source of conflict. This divisiveness often makes it difficult for to objectively assess the long-term effects of economic activity on social, economic, and environmental conditions. In response, the South Slough reserve worked with the Coos Watershed Association to establish and facilitate the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds—a group of local stakeholders that represents diverse interests. The Partnership develops objective informational tools that serve as a foundation for community and economic development initiatives.

Project Benefits

- This project empowered the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds, a collaborative effort among public-and private-sector citizens, to develop locally-driven approaches to responsible development and to prepare for climate-related changes on Oregon's southern coast.
- The project's watershed assessment (Coos Bay Estuary Inventory) will help the county revise the outdated Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan; facilitate permit applications, support research projects and businesses, vulnerability assessments, adaptation plans, and community visioning efforts.
- Improved understanding of land use decisions and climate change impacts on the natural environment and local communities. Stakeholders can use the real-time monitoring data to support their work.
- A hydrodynamic model of the estuary that addresses local stakeholders' questions about management options and impacts.
- Strong endorsement for the value of collaboratively working with communities as recognized through Oregon's awarding of the Oregon Land Board's Partnership Award in 2013 to the project team.

Project Approach

The South Slough reserve and its partners used a strong collaborative foundation to engage new stakeholders, develop an indicator-based program for monitoring the impacts of the action plan, and validate a hydrodynamic model for the Coos Estuary.

- Facilitation and Collaboration: The South Slough reserve facilitated the project using a collaborative learning framework for engaging community members, a steering committee, and a series of subcommittees focused on different project components.
- Monitoring and Modeling: A technical advisory group including environmental scientists, economists, and sociologists supported the monitoring and modeling work. The reserve also engaged local decision makers, community members, and other researchers to help shape the Coos Estuary circulation model developed by the project.
- Stakeholder Engagement: A key focus for stakeholder engagement was the Coos Bay Inventory, a compilation of existing data about a range of the area's environmental and socioeconomic attributes. The team worked with the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development to incorporate its new habitat classification data into the inventory. The inventory's subcommittee engaged additional community members help shape associated communication and outreach to facilitate the inventory's use