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NOAA Marine Operations Center-Pacific (MOC-P) Update

NEWPORT - The "tag team" lobbying effort by the Port Commissioners and General Manager for state bonding capacity, should Newport win the Marine Operations Center – Pacific (MOC-P) homeport project, paid off with the passage of Senate Bill 5534 by the legislature in the final hours of their recent session. The Port was notified by Representative Jean Cowan's office that \$19.5 million bonding capacity was included in the bill.

"I'm pleased that even during such challenging economic times that my fellow legislators recognized the long-term benefits of this project and were willing to commit some of our limited bonding capacity to the Port of Newport's effort," stated Representative Cowan.

The City of Newport, Lincoln County, and the Port of Newport also passed a joint resolution in support of Newport's bid for the NOAA homeport project. The resolution was sent to NOAA and Oregon's congressional delegation to encourage continued support for the Port of Newport's application.

Local officials cite the collaborative work among scientific agencies at the Hatfield Marine Science Center, commercial fishers, vessel owners, state and federal regulatory agencies and Oregon Coast Aquarium, makes Newport uniquely qualified as a homeport for the NOAA Marine Operations Center Pacific fleet and will enable NOAA to more effectively pursue its mission.

Additionally, Yaquina Bay offers central, close-up access to high value marine environments, which would reduce fuel consumption and carbon footprints from NOAA's research vessels.

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Home porting NOAA's Pacific fleet in Newport enjoys widespread community support including Hatfield Marine Science Center Director George Boehlert, Oregon State University President Ed Ray, U.S. Congressman Kurt Schrader, and U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley.

Senators Wyden and Merkley stated in a recent letter to Rear Admiral Bailey at NOAA that, "Given the rare concentration of oceanic expertise available through the many research facilities located in Newport, we feel it offers NOAA's Pacific fleet benefits that no other location can provide."

Supporters believe the home porting of NOAA's Pacific fleet in Newport will enhance the reputation of Oregon as the nation's hub for marine related scientific studies and a leader in understanding environmental relationships and developing energy related technology to address needs of the future.

Other Oregon communities and state officials are being encouraged to continue to voice their support to NOAA for the home porting of NOAA's Pacific fleet in Yaquina Bay, Newport, Oregon, as it would benefit the entire state.

Preliminary information is being gathered and discussions with regulatory permitting agencies is ongoing in anticipation NOAA's Pacific fleet locating in Newport. A dive was conducted at the proposed NOAA site in South Beach to assess existing structural footprints and bay bottom samples.

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