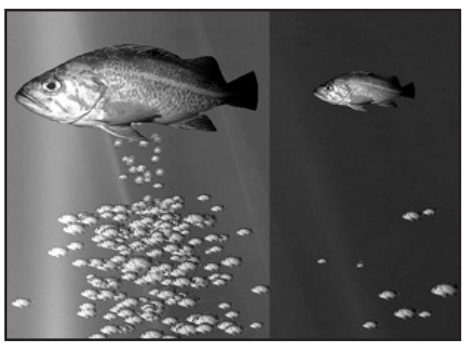
Video Expose' May Ignite Debate!

New Documentary Makes Case for Marine Reserves

By THE STAFF
Of The Beacon

NEWPORT — A video documentary that is sure to set off an explosive debate in the fishing community will premiere Tuesday, Jan. 18 at the Newport Performing Arts Center.

"Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean" is a 30-min. video that concludes, "The largest fisheries collapse in the history of the United States is unfolding off of Oregon's shores, threatening the fishing industry, the economy of coastal communities as well as the health of the state's ocean waters."



SCENES FROM the upcoming video documentary "Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean," that will premiere Jan. 18 in Newport. Above images courtesy of Green Fire Productions.

The 7 p.m. premiere will be followed by a discussion with scientists, fishermen, conservationists, community leaders and the audience. The documentary features stunning views of Oregon's underwater world and up-to-date information about the condition of the ocean.

The video makes a pitch for creating marine reserves, said Karen Meyer of Green Fire Productions. The establishment of marine reserves — areas where fishing is prohibited — is a hotly-contested issue that would impact both commercial and sport angling. Meyer claims that commercial trawl fishing has reduced the rockfish population to 25 percent of its unfished abundance.

"Oregon has one of the richest temperate marine ecosystems in the world, yet we have not protected any ocean habitat along the Oregon Coast," she told the *Beacon*. "While we come at this from a conservation point of view, we were looking to see if there was some common ground, and I think we found some.

Several leading scientists with Oregon State University have rallied to the film's theme. One of them, Mark Hixon, a marine biolgist, recently co-authored a new study on rockfish.

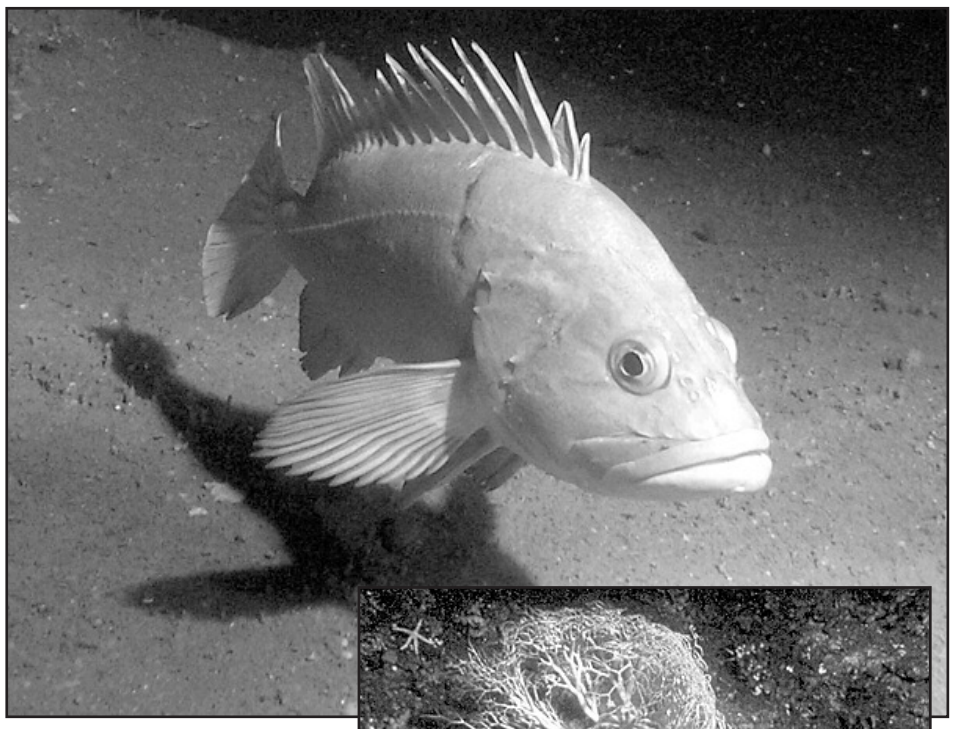
"There's a clear sense of urgency for establishing marine reserves on our coast because there's probably no way to rebuild our rockfish populations without them," said Hixon.

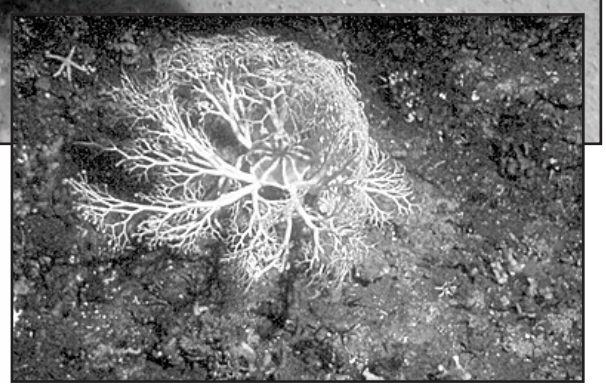
Despite the documentary's conservationist bent, some fishermen are supportive of the video's call for a middle ground in protecting marine resources.

"We must now do a course correction," said Jeff Feldner, Newport, a commercial fisherman for since 1972. "Our ability to properly manage those species must catch up with our ability to catch them."

Green Fire's Meyer said the video was funded by three private philanthropic organizations including the Jubitz Family Foundation, the Lazar Foundation and the Alice B. Tyler Perpetual Trust.

At a recent sneak preview of "Common Ground," one coastal viewer offered the comment, "Amazing images! I had no idea of the marine life here. My first reaction is that I want everyone in Oregon to see this film."





A YELLOWEYE, above, courtesy of Victoria O'Connel, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game and a Basketstar, at right, courtesy of Oregon State University.

The Newport premiere and public forum of "Common Ground: Oregon's Ocean" is 7-9 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 18. The Performing Arts Center is located at 777 W. Olive St., Newport. A $5 donation is suggested at the door.

It would be wise for all sport anglers and commercial operators to attend this preview and join in on the ensuing discussion. Creative thinking in order to find a common ground may be the only way to soften the heavy hand of federal regulations that are sure to follow.

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