

October 20, 2014  
5:30 P.M.  
Newport, Oregon

The City Council of the City of Newport met in a joint meeting with the Lincoln County Commission and the Port of Newport Commission on the above date in the Oregon Coast Community College Commons, at the main campus in Newport.

In attendance from the City of Newport: **David Allen, Richard Beemer, Laura Swanson, Sandra Roumagoux, Ralph Busby, and Mark Saelens.** Dean Sawyer was excused. Staff present was **City Manager Nebel, City Recorder Hawker, Fire Chief Murphy, and Police Chief Miranda.**

In attendance from Lincoln County: **Terry Thompson.** Staff in attendance was **Wayne Belmont, County Counsel, Kim Herring, Administrative Assistant, and Casey Miller, Public Information Officer.**

In attendance from the Port of Newport: **Walter Chuck, Ken Brown, JoAnn Barton, Dean Fleck, and David Jincks.** Staff in attendance was **Kevin Greenwood, General Manager.**

Community members in attendance: **Marilyn Greene, Mark Flores, Kelley Retherford, Sherry Kasper, Mike Sorensen, Vella Sorensen, Sherry Rowland, James Rowland, Russell Harley, Cynthia Renner, G. Perry, James Burke, Judith Chey, Eugene Law, Sheri Fixler, Jeremy Powell, Russell Johnson, James Franklin, Chris Burkman, Tom McNamara, Will Williams, Dennis Bartoldus, Carol DeMuth, Mike Becker, Andy Long, Stewart Lamerdin, Wendy Engler, Toni Mitchell, Doug Alldridge, Toby Mitchell, Alicia Billings, John Holt, Alan Baird, Kay Moxness, Barbara Leff, Jay Robinson, Tom Divis, Bev Divis, Yale Fogarty, Rob Wienert, Barbara Dudley, Wayde Dudley, Marcia Rowley, Shannon West, Mariah Colmenero, Lynnette Mattes, Katherine Howard, Theresa Wisner, Don Williams, Jim Lynn, Andrew Bartoldus, Patsy Brookshire, Jan Stevenson, Mary Coelho, Kemper Mirick, Grant Mirick, Leonard Bruce, Leanne Dordan, Julie Hollen, Bob Daugherty, Aaron Chappell, Carlos Lazaro, Lorna Davis, Sue Keesee, George Lewis, Sandy Hayden, Jen Rozewski, Charisa Lockman, Charlotte Carter, Elliott Crowder, Barbara Burgess, Karen Dunlop, Sammy Butts, Kim Savage, Tia Retherford, Brian Clancy, Laurie Rau, Laura Syron, Linda Neigebauer, Leslie Brown, Dennis Cannon, Gretchen Kazebier, Dennis Lloyd, Jan Novak, Mark Cholewinski, Nina Crites, Kimberly Jones, Rick Bronw, David Enyeart, Carol Ritchey, Duane Barnhart, Wes Gromlich, Jim Kusz, Janet Wood, Richard Wood, Susan Sturm, Kelly Greer, Samui Payment, Carol Fisher, Pat Lewis, Gretchen Nelson, Marcia Tharp, Paul Stangeland, Gary Lahman, Jill Marks, Mark Marks, Marion Moir, Randy Butts, Cindy McConnell, Mark McConnell, Stan Parker, Teresa Rippy, Josh Erwin, Mary Larkin, Doug Kerr, James Oeden, Kurtis Hair, Ray Woodruff, Glen Butler, Amanda Clendenin, Mike Eastman, Ralph Grutzmacher, Kerry Kemp, Dortehea Derickson, Craig Putman, Judie Germain, Nancy Fitzpatrick, Pahl Scharping, Margaret Mortimer, Joe Joncas, Joan Haines, John Haines, Cathy Devereaux, Brad Feammelli, Dan Hellin, Mike de Sosa, Janet Louise Voss, John Ray, Elizabeth Atly, Pamela Garland, Eric Wedel, Storm Wedel, Karen Naill, Sam Naill, Karen Rozewski, Taya Keesee, Bruce Wellaw, Sue Martin, Robert Brittsman, Frances Clause, Amanda Reeves, Jo Byriel, Barbara Berge, Sally Carr, Jeff Pridgeon, Kristine Castillo, Olivia Brown, Cheryl**

Davis, Kay Skaggs, Robert Bierwirth, Michelle Branam, Stephen Lovin, Sara Fixler, Joshua Burter, Jason Eibner, Julie Hanrahan, Mark Hanrahan, Joseph Huff, Susan Andersen, Briane Greene, Lars Robison, LeOra Johnson, Debra Smith, James Hanselman, Joann Ronzio, Rod Doubleday, Heather Hessler, Lori Galvan, Johnny Law, Greg Krutzikowsky, Barbara Frye, Sally Lockyear, Bette Perman, Jeff Hollen, Christie Burns, Elinor deSosa, Jacque de Sosa, Marvin Sannes, Brian Hudson, Kate Heasley, Sara Skamser, Jhn McKinney, Roberta Baxter, Janet Jackson, Glen Butler, Yale Fogarty, Jay Bozievich, Eric Sherman, Kinder Cottrell, Robert Keller, Rhonda Harman, Dennis Bishop, John Garland, Bekki Wagner, Sylvia Pauly, Alan Holzapfel, Lindsay Clark, Terry Obteshka, Eileen Obteshka, Mike Pettis, Bruce Mate, Dac Wilde, Bill Bain, Wessel Lewis, JoDana Bright Taylor, Jesse Burrows, Joshua Williams, Jennifer Stevenson, Jim Geisinger, Jim Gohlsdorf, Don Baker, William Mortimer, Charlie Plybon, Deborah Boone, Bud Shoemake, Jan Power, Tracy Shaw, Rob Murphy, and Robert Waddell.

### CALL TO ORDER - BOB JACOBSON

Bob Jacobson stated that two hours have been allotted for what could be a very long program tonight. He welcomed everyone in attendance. He stated that the topic of tonight's meeting is perhaps the most important topic in a while as it is a matter of life and death for mariners - both commercial and recreational. He added that he hopes through public comment and the petitions that Carol DeMuth has collected with over 15,000 signatures, that the Coast Guard will reverse this important decision. He stated that the purpose of this meeting is to offer testimony regarding the closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport.

Jacobson read the testimony guidelines. He noted that this meeting is being taped and a copy of the tape would be made available to the U.S. Coast Guard and the Congressional delegation in Washington, D.C.

Jacobson recognized Carol DeMuth, the organizer of a petition that contains upwards of 15,000 signatures in support of retaining the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport.

Jacobson made introductions including the three entities who organized the meeting: **Terry Thompson**, Commissioner, and **Wayne Belmont**, County Counsel from Lincoln County, **Kevin Greenwood** from the Port of Newport, and **Spencer Nebel**, City Manager of the City of Newport. He introduced **Kaety Jacobson** and **Ruby Moon**, from the Extension Office, who were instrumental in organizing this meeting. Jacobson also introduced U. S. Congressman **Kurt Schrader**, **Kate Gauthier**, representing Senator **Jeff Merkley's** office, **Fritz Graham**, representing Senator **Ron Wyden's** office, Senator **Arnie Roblan**, and Representative **David Gomborg**, and Representative **Debra Boone** from Clatsop County.

### U.S. CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER INTRODUCES REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD T. GROMLICH, COMMANDER OF THE THIRTEENTH U.S. COAST DISTRICT

Congressman Kurt Schrader stated that he appreciated everyone showing up for this meeting, and the Admiral agreeing to attend. He noted that he was glad that the D.C. Coast Guard had changed its attitude toward participation in this meeting. He stated that he and Admiral Gromlich have to leave at approximately 7:30 P.M., but that representatives from their offices will stay and hear testimony. He added that if participants do not get a chance to speak, or would like to leave written testimony, that

this information be given to Jacobson so that we can try to convince D.C. of the need for the air facility to remain open. He asked that if someone has specific questions, that they be given to Jacobson so that they can be researched and hopefully get the Coast Guard to change the situation.

Schrader introduced Admiral Richard Gromlich. He reported that Gromlich has served in North Bend and also at the Charleston, South Carolina location where they are also looking at budget cuts. He stated that Gromlich graduated from Coast Guard Academy in 1983, worked his way through the ranks, and is a respected member of the Coast Guard. He noted that Gromlich is responsible for the Pacific Northwest which is a large and tough area, and that he has experience with weather and other conditions in Oregon. He welcomed Gromlich.

**Admiral Richard Gromlich** thanked the Oregon congressional delegation and state and local officials who had offered a personal invitation to him to attend this meeting. He thanked everyone for their continued support of the Coast Guard. He thanked the City of Newport for being a Coast Guard City - one of only 16 in the country. He noted that the city has shown support for military members and their families, and stated that he appreciates how much that means in communities along the Oregon and Washington coasts. He stated that he was fortunate to have been stationed at North Bend from 1990 to 1994. He added that he was in North Bend when the air facility in Newport was located in an "old, beat up trailer," and in 1994 when the new facility was built and the Coast Guard began to stand 24-hour, seven days per week watches. He stated that he lived in North Bend and understands the coastal storms, sneaker waves, and rogue waves. He added that he understands the environment on the Oregon and Washington coasts and is committed to ensuring that the Coast Guard, whatever happens, is able to respond and do what it does best. He stated that the decision to close of the air facility in Newport was a part of the budget submission for fiscal year 2014 that was submitted by the President. He added that the Coast Guard is authorized to close the two facilities as a part of its appropriations bill for last year. He emphasized that this is a tough environment with sequestration, continuing resolutions, and declining budgets. He stated the Coast Guard constantly has to make very difficult decisions that are hard and personal, but that those tough decisions are made at the highest levels of the organization, and the final decision to close these air facilities was made by the Commandant of the Coast Guard. He stated that the air facility in Newport will close on November 30, 2014, and, even at his level of the Coast Guard, he cannot do anything about it as far as that closure date or offer to delay the closure. He added that he must carry out the closure. He noted that he expects that many people in attendance had probably come expecting to hear something different, and he apologized that he is unable to tell attendees anything different. He stated that the Coast Guard followed its processes in the closure of this facility, and that he regrets that the process broke down particularly in dealing with state and local citizens. He reiterated that the process was followed, and the process attendees are involved in now is to make concerns heard so that officials higher up the chain can hear those concerns understand the impact of the decisions that have been made. He stated that there are some people who do not think that he should be standing here tonight, but he emphasized that he needs to hear the concerns and comments, and he assured attendees that he was listening. He added that since the decision to close the air facilities was announced, he has listened to the news; read the newspapers; monitored websites; monitored blogs; looked at the petition; and attended the stakeholder meeting. He stated that "we are listening and will

continue to listen.” He introduced the local Coast Guard officers in attendance, including: **Todd Trimpet of U.S. Coast Guard Station North Bend; Ryan O’Meara of U.S. Coast Guard Station Yaquina Bay; and Carlos Hessler of U.S. Coast Guard Station Depoe Bay.** Gromlich stated that regardless of what happens, these Coast Guard members will continue to serve, and the Coast Guard will be there to answer the call.

## **U.S. CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER INTRODUCES GINNY GOBLIRSCH WHO WILL PROVIDE THE HISTORY OF, AND REASONS FOR, THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AIR FACILITY AT THE NEWPORT MUNICIPAL AIRPORT**

**Ginny Goblirsch** read the following statement:

“I have been asked to address the history of our air station and its importance to our community.

First, I want to be very clear that our remarks tonight are not in any directed toward local and district USCG personnel. They are the epitome of professionalism, service, and sacrifice. They provide outstanding service to our communities and are the reason why the Coast Guard is held in such regard by the public. We will fight hard to keep them. Our comments are directed solely to you, Admiral Zukunft, USCG Commandant, Washington, D.C., as the person who made the decision to close the Newport USCG air station.

We are frustrated. Your own personnel would tell you closing the Newport air station is a mistake. They know the conditions here. While they, of course, will continue to respond to emergencies at sea, they will do so knowing full well they do not have the backup from a quick response helicopter. We have asked you to keep the station open; yet you remain silent. We meet here tonight to express our concerns, but you are absent.

In 1985, after a series of accidents, the capsizing of the F/V Lasseigne with the loss of all three crewmembers ignited this community. We said enough and demanded that a USCG quick response helicopter unit be stationed at the Newport airport. Sidney Lasseigne and Newport Fishermen’s Wives with widespread community support and the support of our congressional delegation were ultimately successful. The capsizing of the F/V Lasseigne was a clear example of why an immediate response USCG helicopter was needed on the central Oregon Coast. I’d like to share just a little bit of the final report from that accident with you.

At 7:24 A.M., on November 15, 1985, the Coast Guard received an emergency call from Kenneth Lasseigne, skipper of the F/V Lasseigne. It was clear that the skipper understood he was in a serious crisis situation as he was taking on water and listing. Four minutes later at 7:28 A.M., he reported that he could not get into the fish hold to find where the water was coming from. He reported his correct location as 20 miles off Siletz Bay, north of Newport. The Coast Guard told him to have everyone put on life jackets and he replied, “Got ‘em on.” This was the last transmission from the vessel. Multiple assets were launched - helicopters from Astoria and North Bend, and lifeboats from Stations Depoe Bay and Newport. The Astoria helicopter arrived on scene first at 8:38 A.M., slightly over one hour after the first transmission. They found the vessel capsized and two men - Kenneth Lasseigne and Randy Bacon floating nearby. Randy appeared to still be alive and was flown to North Lincoln Hospital which has a unit specializing in the treatment of hypothermia. Doctors and nurses tried for three hours to revive him but were unsuccessful. Kenneth had slipped below the water with one arm still attached to his life

jacket. He was retrieved by the lifeboat from Depoe Bay and was deceased. The third person, Jean Yves Guinsbourg, was never found.

The official report concluded that at the time of the capsizing, the seas were of the type to be expected and overcome off the Oregon coast in November. Cause of death - hypothermia and drowning. This is a classic case of sudden capsizing with little or no time to properly don survival gear. Had the helicopter been on scene quicker, there was an excellent chance that those young men could have been saved.

Accidental cold water immersion is not limited to the commercial fishing fleet - it includes anybody on or near the water. Quick response and rescue are key to surviving cold water immersion. The Newport-based helicopter has saved many lives over the years.

During the 1986 campaign, the Commandant told us that we were not eligible for this service because we did not fit the national standard for placement of SAR helicopter air bases. That national standard is two hours for a search and rescue helicopter to arrive on scene. Thirty years later, it remains the same. It is way past time to change the standard to reflect real conditions particularly when considering response times in cold versus warm waters. The Coast Guard's own research and actual accidents have shown time and time again, one hour is too long for our region - never mind two. The standard called for here where the water is very cold, the sea very rough, and the coastline very rocky should be 30 minutes at most. Yet, you use that old standard to justify the closure of the air station today.

The USCG, like any of the rest of us, will always have budgetary issues. In 1986, our Congressional delegation led by Representative Les Aucoin, and later Senator Mark Hatfield, went to work passing an act of congress appropriating 15 million dollars to the Coast Guard so they could construct and operate the air base in Newport. The city and county donated services and land and we worked together to realize a satisfactory solution for our needs. Today, we again ask that you work with us and our representatives in congress to keep the air station open and address the issues which threaten its continued operation.

So, what is so different now that justifies the closure? A lot and nothing. Accidents continue to happen - people end up in the water and people die in the water if they are not rescued quickly - minutes count around here. We have not grown thicker skins. Last week, five tourists, trapped on the rocks with an incoming tide, were successfully rescued because the helicopter arrived on scene in 20 minutes. Had they been out there longer, the rising tide and rough seas would have swept them away to almost certain death.

The central Oregon coast continues to grow. There are more fishermen, more visitors, more boaters. The recreational fleet is venturing even further out to sea for albacore tuna and halibut. People flock to our beaches which, while beautiful, are rife with hidden dangers - rocky shores, sneaker waves, strong winds, and brutal currents. The NOAA western Pacific fleet now calls Newport its homeport, our international terminal has been rebuilt and soon will begin maritime commerce operations. We are a major deep-water port for our region.

You blame congress for having to show consolidation of assets yet remain silent about the ramifications of the air station closure. You say search and rescue missions are a Coast Guard priority while you gut basic services.

We've reviewed your budget documents; looked at your research regarding cold water survival; and revisited your fundamental core mission for which you are known and are undoubtedly and deservedly most proud. You exist first and foremost to "Protect those on the sea, and rescue those in distress." I'll bet most of the fine men and women who enlist in the Coast Guard do so because they want to save lives - not pluck the dead from the sea.

The language in the budget justification presented to congress is misleading at best. You say, "*The budget requests \$6.75 billion to operate and maintain Coast Guard assets and sustain essential front-line operations.*" Further, "*Operational efficiencies that scale cutter, boat, and aircraft hours will reduce resources required for fuel and variable maintenance with no anticipated impact to operation. Safety of life (search and rescue), urgent security activities, and operational hours dedicated to meet minimum proficiency standards will be preserved.*" Hogwash. Air stations Newport and Charleston are specifically line itemed for cuts that you say will save \$6 million between the two. So what's that - \$3 million for Newport? Your budget cuts Coast Guard lifesaving services in half for the entire Oregon coast with direct impacts to northern California and southern Washington. Your decision guts local police, fire, and search and rescue operations all along the coast.

Transferring the two helicopters from here to another region simply moves the costs of flying and maintaining the helicopters from here to there. It saves you nothing and costs us everything. Is this what you mean by "consolidation of assets?"

We have the right to be heard. Thousands of people have asked that the decision be reversed. Stakeholders and the public need to have a place at the table when your ability to perform lifesaving missions is jeopardized. We understand the issues facing the Coast Guard are complex and challenging. Don't make the situation worse by simply closing the air station. Work with us instead of against us to address your basic service challenges. We are the U.S. Coast Guard's strongest supporters. We want to be your partner; not your adversary. By working together, we can ensure the Coast Guard's next 30 years are the best yet in meeting your lifesaving mission.

Thank you."

Goblirsch asked that the Coast Guard reverse its decision and allow the Congressional delegation, stakeholders, and members of the public, the opportunity to meet with the highest ranking Coast Guard members to discuss these issues so they can understand what it is really like on the ground. She stated that if the Coast Guard will not listen to its Admiral in the Thirteenth District and the Captains in North Bend, she asked what stakeholders can do. She added that she is disturbed as to how this issue has been handled. She stated that she has gone through the budget and justification and there was never a discussion about impacts at the local levels in cold water areas. She noted that Congress was reassured that assets would be able to fill in the gap and there would be no disruption to service. She added that this is not just right. She stated that is not honest and cannot be tolerated for the Coast Guard's basic service. She asked the Coast Guard to serve the public along the coast.

## **COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

**Senator Arnie Roblan** stated that he grew up in Port Angeles, and lived in Coos Bay, and both communities are heavily dependent on the fishing and timber industries. He

added that these two dangerous occupations depended on the Coast Guard to rescue people. He stated that North Bend will also be losing helicopters, and that he hopes the Coast Guard can arrive at a better conclusion.

**Representative David Gomberg** stated that the federal delegation is being asked to carry the message to Washington, D.C. He thanked everyone for attending. He noted that Newport is home to the largest commercial fishing fleet in Oregon; the larger charter fleet in Oregon; and the destination of many tourists who encounter sneaker waves, rocks, and currents. He added that he has not seen any tourists in survival suits. He stated that the first responders are concerned about the lack of Coast Guard assistance. He reported that the Newport Airport is the only airport of the three (including North Bend and Astoria) that is above the tsunami inundation zone. He noted that logic suggests that the air station be located at the Newport Airport - out of the tsunami inundation zone. He urged the Coast Guard to delay this decision and to ultimately overturn what will ultimately be a bad decision.

**Representative Debra Boone**, from Tillamook, thanked the Coast Guard. She stated that she supports the mission of maintaining the Coast Guard Air Facility at the Newport Airport. She asked that a strong message be sent that this facility remain in Newport.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**David Jincks** read the following letter, written by Heather Mann, Executive Director, of the Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, into the record:

“Dear Commandant Zukunft:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Midwater Trawlers Cooperative (MTC). MTC represents 23 midwater trawl catcher vessels that participate in several fisheries including both the at-sea and shoreside whiting and traditional bottom trawl fisheries on the west coast, and Pollock, cod, and other groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

On behalf of the MTC member vessel owners, skippers, crew, and their families, I am writing to strongly urge you to reverse your decision to eliminate the Coast Guard’s air rescue helicopter station currently located in Newport. This is simply a matter of life or death for our fishermen, and I am convinced that lives will be lost if you remove this critical service in our area.

As you are more than well aware, the water temperatures in the Pacific Ocean off of Oregon are extremely cold. The average temperature in January is 49 degrees. The difference between fifteen minutes in the ocean for a human being and one hour in the water is basically the difference between a search and rescue mission and a search and recovery mission.

All of the compelling reasons to originally site the station in Newport not only still exist, they are even greater. Newport is home to a large and diverse commercial and recreational fishing fleet. While I appreciate that technological advances have improved the search capabilities of the Coast Guard, there is still no better way to find a person in the water than human eyes on the scene from a helicopter. Mariners who end up in the water can be quickly separated from their vessel due to currents and other factors. Technological electronic advances are virtually meaningless in these situations.

Over the last century, we have lost well over 100 commercial fishermen from Lincoln County. Please do not put our community in the position where more lives will be lost. Especially not to save money - surely there must be some other area where the budget could be trimmed. How much is one human life worth? To add insult to injury, I am stunned that you made the decision to cease helicopter operations on the first day of the crab season. This is a slap in the face to not just those going out on the water for this dangerous fishery, but to their families and community as well.

On December 11, 2001, we lost a vessel on the opening day of the Dungeness crab fishery. Four souls were lost that day. As a board member of the Newport Fisherman's Wives, I personally spent individual time with each of the families that lost a loved one. To this day, I am haunted by the overwhelming grief that those families faced then and even now. I do not want families to be in that position - especially when there are things that can be done to prevent these tragedies. I pray no one ever has to look into the eyes of a grieving wife and her children and tell them the chopper just did not make it in time."

Jincks stated that he has been a mariner for 48 years, and spent his whole life on the ocean as a commercial seaman, commercial fisherman, and recreational fisherman. He reported that he has personally experienced the loss of vessels and crew. He added that he lost a vessel in the best of conditions where the entire crew donned survival suits and stepped off the vessel into a life raft and all survived; and noted that even in the best of conditions this is tough. He added that this is the ideal situation, but noted that very seldom, in maritime tragedies, do you see the ideal situation. He reported that most of the time, maritime tragedies occur in severe weather, heavy weather, where vessels are stressed, the crew is stressed, and the captain is stressed. He added that he has experienced one of these losses too. He reported that there were three people on board, and two crew were recovered in their survival suits in which they had drowned. He noted that the survival suit is not the tremendous safety factor that people think it is, but it is the best thing that mariners have going for them. He added that there are many variables with the survival suits. He noted that in this tragic accident, the crew entered the water rapidly; their vessel failed; it was cold water, and the captain's suit was empty. He reported that he told their families that they were not coming home. He added that the captain of the vessel were not recovered, and he told the family, noting that it was a tough one because his mom and dad were my mom and dad.

Jennifer Stevenson, President of the Newport Fisherman's Wives read the following into the record:

"I would like to thank our federal, state, county, and city representatives for attending this important town hall meeting, as well as the Port of Newport. I am pleased that the USCG reconsidered sending Rear Admiral Gromlich, and we hope you will send our message back to the Commandant in D.C.

Our community has shown their disapproval of this hasty decision to close our Newport Air Station. Our online petition is now over 15,000 signatures and hundreds more have signed our paper petition.

As a second generation member of the Newport Fishermen's Wives, my mother was on the "original" board that spearheaded the placement of the Newport Air Station and fundraised for placement of the hospital helicopter pad. To this day, whenever the helicopter flies over, I recognize Newport Fishermen's Wives efforts and the unneeded

loss of life that had to occur before placement of the Air Station in Newport. Since then, numerous air rescues have been attributed to saving lives. We are lucky to have such brave Coast Guard service men and women serving here in Newport, a "Coast Guard City." The Newport air unit gives needed support to our Coast Guard cutters during water rescues and is backup to our local responders. I can say the City of Newport and the Newport Fishermen's Wives are very proud of our Coast Guard.

Having grown up in a proud fishing family, we are aware of the dangers accompanying this livelihood. My mother carried on with family affairs during my father's fishing absence. This is typical in most fishing families. The "what if" scenario was never talked about. I continue by her example and feel lucky that my generation of fishing families have the support of the Newport Coast Guard air unit. I can only imagine the insecurity that will be caused by its absence. While our fishing fleet has embraced new technologies and fishing methods to enhance safety, and even though the Coast Guard has improved response time, the technology is still not available to give us the kind of coverage we need without a local helicopter.

The Oregon coast will always be an unsafe and unforgiving environment that requires the deepest respect. A respect established early in my youth with the loss of Ken Lasseigne, the uncle of my close friend. Their family's pain was evident to me even as a child, as I watched this family continue on the best they could, but nothing could replace their son, a husband, a father. Our small fishing community rallied around the family as Sydney Lasseigne poured her grief into campaigning for the Newport Air Station. She never blamed anyone for their loss, but never wanted anyone else to experience the same overwhelming pain.

Timing of the Coast Guard Air Station closure, one day before the start of the Dungeness crab season, identified as one of the most dangerous fisheries in the nation is ill-advised and a gamble with human lives. It is very common for high surf and bar closures to occur during this time, all the more reason for the Newport air station not to be closed.

This year, as the boats cast their lines, their farewells will be felt a little longer, with the knowledge that our Newport Coast Guard helicopter air station is empty.

We are but servants to the sea, allowed to make a decent living for our families in hopes to watch them grow. As president of the Newport Fishermen's Wives, the hardest part of my job is placing another name on our memorial, writing a check of support, and greeting another grieving family at our annual Blessing of the Fleet.

I would like to close with a Fishermen's prayer, God grant that I may live to fish; Until my dying day. And when it comes to my last cast, I then most humbly pray, When in the Lord's safe landing net; I am peacefully asleep. That in His mercy I be judged; As big enough to keep.

On behalf of the Newport Fishermen's Wives, I would present the signatures of 18,000 petition signers, and numerous letters of support. Admiral Gromlich could you please assure these petitions are presented to the Commandant in Washington, D.C.?"

**Michele Longo Eder** read the following statement into the record:

"To Admiral Zukunft: My name is Michele Longo Eder.

People from all walks of life enjoy the central coast. Ocean kayakers and surfers ride the waves. Families stroll the sands. Hundreds of recreational fishermen, in individual or charter vessels, make thousands of trips across the bar, going miles offshore, in search

of that halibut or tuna. We're home to NOAA's Pacific Fleet. Government scientists and Oregon State University students ply our waters.

All these ocean-going groups have been served by the presence of Newport's rescue helicopter. Of significance to me is the crucial importance of the helicopter to the safety of our commercial fishing fleet. My husband and son and our crew fish for Dungeness crab and sablefish out of Newport. Over 250 commercial fishing vessels call Newport home, and twice that many vessels, from California to Alaska, travel the seas and come to Newport to deliver fish.

Still, the Coast Guard has slated Newport's helicopter for elimination, effective the first day of Dungeness crab season, a fishery recognized by both the Coast Guard and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, as one of the deadliest in the nation.

In justifying the cut, the Coast Guard stated that the helicopter in North Bend will only be an hour's flight time away, and that is within the "national standards." May be for the Gulf of **Mexico**. But certainly not for the frigid waters of the Pacific Northwest. And that hour of flight time - it will be longer than that after incident verification, asset allocation, and pre-flights checks.

What happens when you are overboard in the waters of the Pacific? You might have 30-60 minutes of "useful consciousness." Hypothermia sets in almost immediately. Your arms and legs are no longer of any use to you. Unless timely rescued, you die a **tortuous death**. Fighting for your life in panic, you gulp salt water into your lungs, causing spasms, which cuts off air supply, and buildup of lactic acid occurs. You experience severe burning pain. Convulsions ensue. Heart failure occurs. And, all that time - you know you are going to die.

In 2001, our son Ben Eder and three of our crew members, Rob Thompson, Jared Hamrick, and Steve Langlot, died at sea when our crab vessel capsized on the first day of the season. They were in the ocean for an hour before their overturned boat was discovered by another fishing vessel and the Coast Guard notified. Our men had been in the freezing waters too long to survive. Please stop - **STOP**- telling people that arriving in an hour will be fine.

Admiral, we urge you to restore funding in your budget for this essential life-saving flight. Your budget document? Yes, I've skimmed the 500 pages or so. It's been publically stated by the Coast Guard that it will save six million dollars and 27 personnel if the Newport rescue facility is closed. Really? That's not accurate. The budget document itself states that the six million purportedly saved is for **both** the Charleston **and** Newport air facilities. And that's just one example of misrepresentations made to the public by the Coast Guard's administration. And in case the Admiral says he cannot find room in his budget to fund our air facility, let me make a few suggestions: Admiral - Maybe the Coast Guard doesn't need to build a new small arms shooting range in Virginia that is in your budget for 2015, and will cost over **eight million dollars**. Maybe, just maybe, the Senior Executive Service personnel you employ and already pay **\$242,000** annually - maybe **they** don't need that raise this year that you have included in your budget. Maybe one of those many defense contractors - like Booz Allen - hired to build multimillion dollar assets, just maybe you could trim them back a bit - certainly enough to fund our air facility. Oh, and that "Motion Picture and TV office - maybe that could be cut back, too. **Don't tell me Congress has forced the closure of the Newport Air Facility by cutting your budget - tell me instead that funding the Coast Guard's core mission of search and rescue is of the highest priority to you.**

As Ginny Goblirsch has done previously, I served as a member of the Coast Guard's very own National Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Advisory Committee. Dan Hardin, the 13<sup>th</sup> District Safety Examiner, Ken Lawrenson, Mike Rudolph, Curt Farrell - we have opened our homes, our boats, and our hearts to them because we trust they, and you, would walk with us to help improve safety at sea. And, when things go wrong out there, as they sometimes do, we trust that the rescue helicopter will be there in minutes.

The commercial fishing industry has made significant advances in safety. We have survival suits and life rafts. EPIRBs to locate vessels. We take safety classes. We train and we drill. We voluntarily have our vessels examined for safety. But **nothing replaces a swift rescue.**

In closing, let me say that we are very grateful for the Yaquina Bay Station's Coast Guard presence and service in our community. In fulfilling your mission of search and rescue, your risk your **own lives** to try and save a stranger. That is the highest calling. But we need, and **you** need, to take the message to the Admiral that he must give you the tools with which to carry out your life saving missions."

Josh Williams, Chief, Depoe Bay Fire Department made the following statement:

"Closing the Newport Air Facility is a mistake. I believe this closure will ultimately cost someone their life. I do not understand how the USCG can be happy with a one hour response time, especially when our communities have response times that are much faster.

How will your national standards be compared for the non-mariner? What about the people stranded in coves with an incoming tide; what about the person who is clinging to the side of a cliff; and what about the people stranded on rocks? Faster helicopters and improved beacons will not help in these instances.

The rescue that occurred on October 11 in Depoe Bay is a prime example of why this USCG helo must stay. You can state all the facts you want about two hour standards, but I can tell you from an emergency responder who was on scene, that two hours would have been far too long.

The helicopter from Newport was on scene quickly enough to save these people's lives. Now you are asking the local public, and fire/rescue agencies to simply stand idle for an hour plus response. I refuse to stand idle and watch our resources be redistributed.

How am I to feel as a coastal Fire Chief knowing that when I have someone in the water, my local Coast Guard unit will come to the scene, but has not been trained or equipped to enter the water to effect a rescue. I have been told that the risk is too great to enter the surf around here, and that you can only train someone to be really good at so many things. This is how I feel about our local fire and rescue personnel. We cannot do more!

There are only a handful of fire agencies in Lincoln County that enter the water, and as we have learned at least one of these agencies may be rethinking their deployment practices, knowing that the USCG is so far away.

As a coastal Fire Chief, the USCG helicopter is my Plan A, and unfortunately, there is no Plan B in my playbook.

Admiral, do you know why I do not allow Depoe Bay firefighters in the water? Other than the obvious danger factor, I don't have to because I know the USCG will be on scene soon. Please do not change that. The public and local rescuers are depending on your quick response."

Williams submitted the following letter, to Admiral Zukunft, for the record:

“Please reverse your decision to close the USCG Air Station Newport, Oregon. There must be another way for the USCG to save money without placing lives in danger. The closure of this Air Station will increase response time on the central Oregon coast from approximately 15 minutes to 60 minutes or more. In my line of work, we do what we can to reduce response times, not increase them.

I am not a polished politician, I am not a metropolitan Fire Chief, I am not used to writing letters to Congressmen, State Representatives, and especially the Admiral of the United States Coast Guard, but this is a cause worth fighting for. The people of this Fire District and this part of the Oregon coast need the assets of the USCG.

The Depoe Bay Fire District serves a small coastal town which caters to tourists. We are protected by volunteer firefighters supplemented by a small career staff. We fight fires, respond to medical calls, car accidents, and often to homes where people just may need some companionship. We are not equipped for - nor are we trained for - water rescue. We rely on the USCG for that and they do a fantastic job.

We were notified on October 2, 2014 that the Air Station in Newport, Oregon would be closed effective November 30, 2014. Now fast forward to a little over a week later, October 11, 2014. My fire district was dispatched to a report of eight people stuck on the rocks just north of Depoe Bay, Oregon.

As it turns out, there were six people on the rocks when the fire district arrived. Several of the individuals decided to jump into the water and struggled to swim to shore. Luckily, they made it. Unfortunately, one young victim was pulled from the surf unconscious, to be given rescue breaths by a caring bystander.

This is where your decision impacts the rubber meeting the proverbial “road.” Upon dispatch, I immediately requested assets in the form of a USCG helicopter. I did this first because I know my area and these people were in serious danger - incoming tide, 15-foot waves, and very cold water. Secondly, I know that time is of the essence, and visitors to the coast are not often prepared for the dangerous surf condition we often experience and hypothermia is a likely possibility.

We arrived to find six individuals trapped by an incoming tide and large waves. One young man decided to jump into the ocean rather than wait for rescue. He was lucky. Had the current swept him out, there were 18-foot breakers waiting to greet him with the power of destruction that would have been no match for a human body. Our Assistant Chief led the operation, dealing with the victims who were pulled from the surf, as our firefighters assessed the victims on the rocks. Luckily, I had requested a USCG helicopter, and luckily, they were in Newport.

Within ten to fifteen minutes of my arrival, the USCG was saving these people from an uncertain future. They were scared, and could not climb any higher on the rocks. We were thirty minutes from a full tide with 18-foot breakers. This was a dangerous situation and one we face often. I believe the outcome would have been very different if the response time was one hour, versus fifteen minutes.

Years ago, the Newport Fishermen’s Wives worked hard to get the helicopter here because they understood the need. They will work just as hard, or harder, to keep it here now. The impact on us will be significant; it will often be painful, and it will be felt often.

There has been a lot of emphasis on saving the mariner, and the USCG insistence that emergency locator beacons make it easier to find vessels in distress. It was stated that the helicopters are faster, and the national standard of two hours will be met. With all

due respect, those arguments do not hold water when it comes to the tourist or resident at the central Oregon coast. One hour in our water could mean death. Our water is too cold and too rough for the surfer in distress or the summertime visitor who does not know our ocean, or the people climbing rocks during high tide.

Please do not remove the USCG helicopter and the fine men and women who make these rescues possible. We hold the United States Coast Guard in the highest regard. We respect what you and your men and women do on a daily basis, but we cannot support this move. As of this past Saturday, you can bet there are five grateful citizens who would agree.”

Jim Geisinger, Executive Vice President, Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc. read the following letter into the record:

“On behalf of the Associated Oregon Loggers (AOL), we would like to express our strong opposition to the Coast Guard plans on closing the air base and moving the chopper back to North Bend on November 30, 2014. It means the closest air rescue support would be nearly an hour from Newport.

Our Association represents approximately 1,000 companies that harvest and manage Oregon’s 30 million acres of forestland. Our sole purpose is doing everything within our power to assist members in their quest for success. We believe success requires a well-planned safety/health program that includes effective, timely rescue if needed.

The missions of Group/Air Station North Bend include maritime search and rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties, providing aids to navigation, and marine environmental protection. In addition, the air station frequently assists federal, state, and county agencies by responding to calls for assistance with inland searches and medical evacuations of injured loggers. Coast Guard officials say it was a tough decision to close the air station, but say it’s the result of an appropriations act in Congress.

The fishermen’s wives first brought the helicopter with its four-person crew to Newport after a series of fishing tragedies in the 1980s. If the helicopter is moved, Coast Guard boats and crews will remain in Newport, but without the chopper. Emergency response times to far out locations will be much more challenging. With no helicopter stationed in Newport, it will cut off all inland rescues. These calls will have to be performed by other rescue personnel, costing valuable time. If a patient has a life threatening injury, they can be transported to a Level One Trauma Center within an hour after the injury their odds of survival is increased. It is also important to know that the rescue helicopter is equipped with a higher level of care than land ambulances. A logger can contact the helicopter company directly or through the 911 system.

**Logger rescued by Coast Guard.** . .A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter crew made a dramatic rescue of a logging accident victim in western Oregon on July 15, 2013. . .The Coast Guard and firefighters executed a complicated rescue of an injured logger near Gales Creek. The logger was working in the bottom of a ravine when he suffered two broken legs after a long log hit him. After getting the 6 A.M. call, fire crews were able to reach him about 800 feet down the steep ravine. The Newport stationed Coast Guard also responded. The helicopter crew lowered a stretcher to the scene of the accident, and then lifted the victim to safety. The tall trees surrounding the accident made for a complicated rescue, but the Coast Guard helicopter with its hoisting capability rushed the victim to Oregon Health and Sciences University Hospital.

Thanks for letting AOL provide this written and oral testimony.”

Jim Gahlsdorf, Gahlsdorf Logging, Inc., read the following into the record:

"I am representing my own interests as an owner and an employer. I am representing other loggers and their employees along with our logging association as an active past president of Associated Oregon Loggers. I am also representing my fellow members of the Oregon OSHA Forest Activities Advisory Committee (FAAC). The committee is made up of consultants, engineers, educators, labor contractors, public agency and timberland owner's representatives, and loggers. The FAAC meets quarterly with Oregon OSHA to discuss and advise on issues and regulations affecting forest workers in Oregon.

We are all very concerned about the effects of re-positioning of the Newport helicopters. We believe the decision will result in decreased availability and increased response time for getting immediate medical attention to injured forest workers when all of our efforts were not enough to prevent a worker from getting seriously injured. Coast Guard helicopters provide a very unique service that commercial air ambulance services do not. Primarily hoist capability for lifting but also marginal weather and night flight operation.

My company is based in Rickreall, just west of Salem. I have thirty employees and have been in business since 1985. We may have another 10 to 20 subcontractors working as fallers and independent truckers. Our operations are a mix of cable and ground based systems and we operate on both industrial private and public timberlands in the Cascade and Coast Ranges. Currently, we have two cable logging operations operating west of Dallas, thirty miles northeast of Newport. On any given day, there would be up to thirty people on these two sites including truck drivers and timber fallers.

Slopes on these two projects are moderate to steep - 30 to 100 percent. Some of the ground is very brushy and includes rock bluffs. The distance from a road is up to 1,500 feet. On some projects, it would not be unusual for workers to be one-half mile from the nearest road with a 1,500 foot drop in elevation.

We have been involved in six situations that necessitated the use of helicopter evacuations due to the remote location of our projects and either the long response time for ground medical providers or the rapid transport of the injured worker. One of these required hoist capability due to the slope, brush, and distance from the nearest road. The Coast Guard was requested but was almost two hours out. We needed to use alternative methods that were higher risk for the victim and the rescuers.

When hoist capability, night time or marginal weather operation is required, there are only two providers - the Coast Guard and the National Guard. The National Guard is not on standby or active patrol as is the Coast Guard. If the National Guard is conducting flight operations training, then they are readily available. Otherwise, it may be up to a two hour delay on call out if the crew and helicopter are not operating and must be called in and pre-flight done. Coast Guard is set up for immediate response, similar to a municipal fire station.

The coverage zone of the Newport station is roughly from Florence to Pacific City, about 85 miles, and east to the I-5 corridor, 45 miles. Steeper slopes generally only extend east about 36 miles. That area is approximately 3,000 square miles or two million acres. There are estimated to be 100 cable logging operations in this zone, operating in conditions previously described. Along with the loggers and timber fallers, there are other forest workers right alongside. These include tree planters, thinning crews, and foresters.

There are easily 2,000 workers in this area, out on remote often steep ground, and up to 2,500 feet from the nearest road.

I, and the people I am representing, strongly urge reconsideration on the decision to move the helicopters. Certainly the service and aid to maritime workers and recreationists is well known and greatly appreciated. With regard to thousands of forest workers, there is no substitute for the capabilities and availability of the Coast Guard helicopters stationed in Newport.”

**Brian Hudson**, a member of the Salmon and Trout Advisory Committee, reported that he serves a representative for the mid-coast, a territory that ranges from Florence to Lincoln City. He noted that he is a retired member of the military and has an understanding of how the military processes work. He added that part of his work is to bring fishermen to the coast. He stated that there is nothing positive in the decision to close the Coast Guard’s Newport Air Facility. He emphasized that the decision was made without the benefit of public input.

**Kate Heasley**, representing private recreational users, reported that her husband found himself stranded on a sand bar in Alsea Bay with an incoming tide. She stated that the Coast Guard was alerted to the water rescue at 1:30 P.M., and the helicopter arrived at 2:02 P.M. from North Bend. She reported that this was ten minutes too late to rescue her husband. She stated that the proposed closure of the Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport guarantees that her story will be the story of countless other families, and she urged reconsideration of the decision to close the facility.

**Sara Skamser** read the following statement into the record:

“My name is Sara Skamser. I am a former commercial fisherman; past president of the Newport Fishermen’s Wives and co-owner of Foulweather Trawl.

We are all here tonight to show our congressional delegation, the governor’s office, and the Coast Guard commanders that we deserve to be a part of this conversation.

We are asking for a delay to carrying out the orders to close the air facility in Newport so this can be revisited with the participation of local and regional representation.

It boggles the mind that the United States Coast Guard has done an about face on the safety of our fishermen and the greater maritime community in Oregon.

We have come to rely on the air facility in Newport which has been manned courageously and professionally for almost 30 years.

In the same 30 years, the fishing fleet has worked at increasing the quality of vessel equipment, crew safety, and survival training, and first aid while also leading the way in innovations in harvesting wild caught seafood sustainably for consumption throughout the globe.

All the growth and innovations in our maritime community here in Newport has come from strong leadership within the fishing, research, governmental, and higher education communities working in collaboration and by having open conversations with each other.

You may say I am a dreamer. . . .

But my hope is that future headlines read: “Newport Fishermen, ocean users, and federal government work together to overcome sequester budget cuts to keep helicopter facility in Newport”.”

**Willie Mortimer**, representing the American Red Cross, spoke in support of keeping the air facility in Newport. He stated that his organization is unable to serve unless the Coast Guard can get people to shore.

**Don Baker**, Fire Chief, North Lincoln County Fire and Rescue District, submitted the following letter for the record:

“As Chief of a fire district whose water rescue team relies largely upon the assistance of USCG air support, I was greatly concerned to learn of the proposed removal of their helicopter from Newport. As well as greatly reducing the potential ocean hazards to our local fleet of fishermen and residents and visitors to the coast who enjoy boating and water recreation, we as a department depend upon them to assist our efforts. Their flight crew has a much greater vantage point from which to spot victims in the open water, and coordinating their efforts with ours leads to more frequent and successful rescues. It is also our policy not to launch rescue water craft in high surf conditions and/or severe weather until we have visual confirmation of the victim from the USCG helicopter.

We’ve trained with the Coast Guard and have come to rely upon our USCG partners to be our guardians and factor into our risk assessment prior to engaging a rescue. This vital air resource assist in our determination to complete our mission in water rescue and often aids in areas that surface teams or water rescue personnel cannot reach in coves, rocks, or beyond our safe operational reach.

The helicopter also assists us with land search and rescue efforts, steep angle cliff rescues, and/or locating seriously injured people in difficult terrain and transporting them to safety.

The Coast Guard’s air support in Newport plays a critical role in the preservation of life along this geographically hazardous coastline, and I would not like to see the lives of local residents and visitors be put in jeopardy with its removal.”

Baker stated that his department deploys water rescue swimmers on a model that was put together with the Coast Guard. He noted that the fastest boat out of Depoe Bay is about forty minutes out. He added that he does not believe that the Coast Guard has thought out the impact on local resources. He stated that locating victims is best done by helicopter due to the shorter operational time to arrive on scene. He encouraged the Coast Guard to consider how their resources impact other local rescue resources, and reverse its decision to remove the air facility from Newport.

**Charlie Plybon**, Oregon Policy Manager for the Surfrider Foundation, read the following letter into the record:

“For the record, my name is Charlie Plybon, and I’m the Oregon Policy Manager for the Surfrider Foundation. We are a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves, and beaches, and I’m here tonight on behalf of our Newport, Siuslaw, and Portland Chapters in strong opposition to the Coast Guard decision to close the air facility and helicopter service in Newport. As an organization, we feel that this closure will put many ocean recreational users, visitors, and beach-goers at a greater risk along the central coast. While we stand by our local ports and fishing community in opposition to this decision, we feel that the ocean recreational community, beach-goers, and visitors to the central Oregon coast have not been appropriately factored into the Coast Guard’s analysis for closing the Newport air operations and consolidating its resources in North Bend.

Surfrider Foundation participated in the stakeholder meeting on October 15 where the Coast Guard provided an overview and partial analysis for the decision. Surfrider finds two fundamental flaws in this analysis that we feel need to be addressed prior to any move of the Coast Guard air operations from Newport.

1. A downward trend in USCG search and rescue operations was detailed on a national and west coast-wide scale that we do not believe translates locally and more importantly is not reflective of high priority rescues of the shoreside and non-boater recreational users. If we were to remove at-sea boater rescues and analyze this statistic for shoreside recreational rescues, we believe that trend is actually going up, creating a greater demand for these resources on the central coast. Anecdotally, we heard from all of our local fire and rescue that these types of recreational rescues are trending up. Further, in speaking with Commander Mark Hiigel of USCG following last week's meeting, he also confirmed that he believed the number of these types of recreational and visitor rescue events are increasing. Surfrider Foundation conducted a Recreational Ocean Use Study for the state's Territorial Sea Planning process and found that the highest concentrations of recreational use occur within Lincoln County when comparing beach and ocean activities amongst other coastal regions. Further supporting this concentration of recreational use are the Oregon Parks and Recreation visitor counts, which demonstrate Lincoln County as highest in coastal park visitation. Surfrider Foundation formally requests that these statistics be provided as they relate to shoreside and non-boater recreational rescues and appropriately factored into risk analysis for closing air facility operations in Newport.
2. The nature of non-boater and shoreside recreational rescues are such that they do not align with risk analysis associated with cold water exposure and hypothermia. The case was demonstrated in crystal clear high definition news coverage just two weeks ago at Fogarty Creek State Park. I don't believe we need to recount those events, but it's an all too common occurrence where a good time at the beach turns deadly in a matter of minutes; not an hour; and certainly not two. These individuals are not equipped with radios, immersion suits, and likely have no cold-water survival training. We ask that a further analysis of cold water survival be examined and considered for recreational users in these extreme shoreside and surf conditions.

In summary, Surfrider Foundation is deeply concerned with the risk analysis and assessment of non-boater recreational ocean and beach users and feels that this has been completely left out of this decision making process. We stand by our local ports and fishing community in their concerns for the closing of the Newport air operations, as it puts those lives in danger. As the general trend of search and rescue increases for non-boater recreational users, loss of these resources would not only put these users at a greater risk in the area of highest concentration of use on the Oregon Coast, but it would also put the lives of other local emergency responders at risk that depend on helicopter operations support.”

John McKinney spoke in opposition to the closure of the USCG air facility in Newport. He read the following:

“My name is John Boehner

And I come from Ohio.  
I am the King of Congress.  
Watch me rollin' in the dough.  
I'm worshipped down on K Street.  
I keep the stuff here moving S-L-O-W.

I've got a friend in Mitch McConnell  
In case you didn't know  
We kid, and call him "Turtle."  
Watch us rollin' in the dough.

My crew here in the Congress  
Line their pockets of silk with gold.  
They don't care for you, or me! (It seems).  
Watch 'em rollin' in the dough.

I can't rule this place alone  
There's a split in the G.O.P.  
We've got an unruly herd of cats  
In a party they call TEA.  
They too, we pray, are wanted  
Down on K Street and on C.  
They don't go along or get along.  
But on one thing we agree. . .  
There's just one percent of us  
Worth rollin' in the dough.

We said we'd break Obama  
But it seems that he won't go.  
We lost sight of our mission.  
Oops, we were rollin' in the dough.

Now I'm not wanted by the Country  
Nor by most of Ohio  
For forgettin' about the People,  
But there's one thing you should know,  
It's not my fault, we got "Occupied."  
Rollin' in the dough."

**Roberta Baxter** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. She noted that the closure of this facility will have a negative impact on tourism in Lincoln County.

**Glen Butler** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. He noted that the closure of this facility means that response time will be more than simply an hour as there is on-scene time that needs to be factored into the calculation.

David Allen, Newport City Council and Vice Chair of the Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council, read the following letter into the record:

“The Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) is the state’s legislatively mandated marine policy advisory body to the Governor, state agencies, and local governments. Although we are not an advisory body to the federal government, we do want to provide comments on the proposal to close the helicopter Air Facility at Newport, Oregon. This is not just a local issue - it has statewide and regional implications.

Fishermen from all along the coast, residents and visitors alike, fish off the central Oregon coast. This includes commercial as well as charter, sport, and recreational fisheries. Citizens from throughout the state and elsewhere recreate on the central Oregon coast. This includes activities such as surfing, kayaking, and others. In addition, a growing ocean research fleet, both federal and state vessels, has a significant presence on the central Oregon coast.

Closing the Air Facility at Newport could result in loss of life due to the slower response time resulting from deploying a helicopter from the remaining Air Stations at either Astoria, Oregon or North Bend, Oregon. The Air Facility at Newport was opened to fill a gap in quick response coverage on the Oregon coast. Closing this facility would result in longer transit times to marine casualties or accidents on the central Oregon coast, and greatly reduced search times once the helicopter does arrive. The water temperatures off the Oregon coast are generally between 50-59° Fahrenheit year round. At these temperatures, a victim’s survival time in the ocean is measured in minutes. Adding an additional 45 minutes in response time could change a USCG flight from a lifesaving mission to one of recovering bodies.

In the ports of Newport and Depoe Bay, charter boat operators carry hundreds of passengers each day. As a practical matter, it would be difficult if not impossible to equip boats and educate passengers in the use of cold-water immersion suits. As such, response time is critical and remains a huge issue.

Moreover, Lincoln County is host to the most visited coastal state park in Oregon, serving over one million visitors annually. As the general trend of search and rescue increases for non-boater recreational users, closing the Air Facility at Newport would not only put these users at greater risk in the area of highest concentration of use on the Oregon coast, but it would also put the lives of other local emergency responders at risk that depend on helicopter operations support.

Furthermore, closing the Air Facility at Newport would impact other USCG stations in the region, putting at risk both rescuers and victims alike. And unlike Astoria and North Bend, the Air Facility at Newport is outside the tsunami inundation zone in the event of a major earthquake. That alone should be reason enough to retain the Air Facility at Newport.

We understand that with the additional responsibilities for homeland security, the USCG has had to stretch its budget. Please let us know what can be done to encourage Congress to fully fund the search and rescue needs of the USCG.

The USCG’s national standard for helicopter on-scene response time is two hours. This standard is applied nationwide. Survival rates are variable with cold-water immersion being the most likely scenario where loss of life occurs in an hour or less, depending on conditions. We ask that informed stakeholders have the opportunity to review this standard and work in partnership with the USCG to further refine response-time standards

based, at least in part, on average water temperatures - cold versus warm - in each USCG district.

As Admiral Zukunft states in his COMMANDANT'S DIRECTION 2014 document, which can be found at [http://www.uscg.mil/seniorleadership/DOCS/CCG\\_Direction\\_2014.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/seniorleadership/DOCS/CCG_Direction_2014.pdf), the U.S. Coast Guard will ensure readiness for all missions, maintain operational focus on prevention and response, and pursue excellence in mission execution and support.

With that said, OPAC unanimously supported at its October 16, 2014 meeting that USCG readiness for missions continue to include the helicopter Air Facility in Newport, Oregon.”

**Bud Shoemake**, General Manager of the Port of Toledo, spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. He stated that the closure of this facility will cost lives.

**Jan Power**, Vice Chair of the Port of Alsea Commission, spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. She read the following letter from the Port of Alsea Board of Commissioners:

“The Port of Alsea Board of Commissioners strongly opposes the closure of the Newport Coast Guard Helicopter Base.

The Port of Alsea District includes most all of south Lincoln County. Recreational tourism is the backbone of our economy. There are a multitude of federal and state parks, with access to miles of ocean beaches, which draw people from across the county and around the world. Alsea Bay alone supports 50,000 boater use days per year. Although we have good support from the Central Oregon Coast Fire and Rescue District inside Alsea Bay, there is no faster response to an accident or disaster outside of the bay and along our beaches than the Coast Guard helicopter. Many lives have been saved because of the location of the Newport Coast Guard Helicopter Base.

We urge you to reconsider this closure. A closure of this magnitude would have a significant impact on our community.”

**Yale Fogarty** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. He reported that there has been a big investment in the international terminal, and the shipping business is about to ramp up, and this is an inopportune time to close this important facility.

**Eric Sherman** reported that he is a local electrician who decided to attend this meeting because he is confused. He asked why, if the budget is a concern, the Coast Guard is refurbishing a facility that will be closed.

**Fritz Graham**, from Senator Wyden's office, stated that the delegation had written a letter asking the Commandant to reverse the decision to close the base. He read the following letter into the record:

“In light of the United States Coast Guard's (USCG) recent decision to close the Air Facility in Newport, Oregon, effective December 2014, we are writing to formally invite you to attend the public meeting scheduled for Monday, October 20, from 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. at the Oregon Coast Community College in Newport, Oregon. If you are not

able to attend, we ask that you send a senior representative from the Seattle district office in your place that can address the public as well as relay their concerns to you.

The coastal community felt denied any kind of opportunity to express an opinion on the closure. Rightfully so, there is anxiety over the impact on response times that this decision will produce. At a briefing held on Friday, October 10, 2014 in Washington, D.C. senior members of the USCG assured Oregon delegation staff that a senior member of the USCG Seattle district office would be participating in the public meeting to be held in Newport on Monday, October 20. We appreciate the commitment by the USCG to have senior staff from the district office present in order to provide the community with much needed information on the decision to close the Newport Air Facility and to explain the capabilities of the remaining USCG assets located in Newport and North Bend.

Newport is a “Coast Guard City” and we join the community in our respect for the work that the USCG does to protect mariners and public safety. However, we believe that the relationship between the USCG and the community of Newport is a partnership that should also be valued. Toward that end, we respectfully urge you to consider this invitation and the opportunity it provides for a discussion with concerned community members.”

**Katie Gauthier**, from Representative Merkley’s Office, reported that this office had conversations with the Commandant about safety. She reported that Representative Merkley will continue to work with Schrader and Wyden. She noted that Representative Merkley plans to be in Newport later this week.

**Jackie Mikalonis**, representing Governor Kitzhaber’s office, read the following letter, from Governor Kitzhaber, into the record:

“I learned recently that within a matter of weeks the United States Coast Guard (USCG) intends to close its Air Facility in Newport, Oregon. The USCG deemed aerial search and rescue capability from Newport to be a priority when the facility was approved in 1986, and the range and volume of maritime uses from that port have expanded dramatically since that time. I am very concerned this proposed November 30 closure could seriously compromise life safety off Newport in Oregon’s cold and often treacherous waters.

Newport’s importance as a commercial fishing port equals that of Coos Bay and Astoria, where USCG intends to maintain aerial operations. This closure would take effect on the cusp of the opening of Oregon’s Dungeness crab season, the state’s top value fishery, which the federal government has recognized as among the highest risk occupations. Newport launches thousands of recreational fishing trips, among them the recreational halibut fishery that can draw upwards of 500 boats in a single day, ranging 30 miles offshore. Similarly, the rapidly growing recreational albacore fishery sees boats traveling 20 to 70 miles offshore. When you add the home porting of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Oregon State University research fleets, the reopening of the international shipping terminal, and the many non-fishing recreational visitors drawn to waters off Newport, I am compelled to urge you to reconsider this decision that effectively cuts search and rescue capabilities.

The State of Oregon enjoys a strong and collaborative working relationship with the USCG, and we value your agency’s vital role in ensuring we have safe and vibrant coastal communities. Maintaining a rapid response capability from the Port of Newport is an

important part of that role. Please contact my staff, Gabriela Goldfarb at 503.387.5232 or [gabriela.goldfarb@oregon.gov](mailto:gabriela.goldfarb@oregon.gov) regarding this matter.”

**Representative Schrader** stated that he was impressed with the testimony that he has heard this evening. He reported that the delegation believes that what it is seeing is totally unacceptable. He added that this is about lives. He stated that the USCG standards across the country are difficult to understand. He added that it is credible for the USCG to place an air facility outside the tsunami inundation zone. He noted that the issue extends beyond fishing and recreation, but also to the timber industry. He requested a shoreside data breakdown. He added that the delegation is going to ask the USCG to delay the closure of this air facility due to a lack of communication and inadequate information on which to base a closure of this nature. He emphasized that the USCG does not have sufficient information to effect this closure in December. He asked that the USCG keep money in its budget so that the Admiral can make a better informed decision to keep the helicopter in Newport. He noted that he needs community support, and asked that letters and petitions continue to be sent to the delegation and Admiral Zukunft.

A short break was taken at approximately 7:30 P.M., and Congressman Schrader and Admiral Gromlich departed.

Following the break, Bob Jacobson called the meeting back to order and served as moderator.

When the meeting resumed, **Ginny Goblirsch** reported that it is unclear whether the six million dollar savings covers both Newport and Charleston, South Carolina, or simply Newport. She stated that the two helicopters stationed in Newport are moving elsewhere, and that one will be held in storage. She stated that the budget savings do not translate if the helicopters will be responding to this area from somewhere else.

“The city donated land,” **Goblirsch** said. “The fire truck was deployed for every take-off and landing. The community did whatever it needed to do to accommodate them.” There’s another word for what this community is feeling - deceived. As recently as April, the community was assured that closure of the air station was off the table. And then, without so much as a warning, no public meeting, no input from the community, surprise...

Of course, now that thousands from over the U.S. have signed a petition to keep the air station open, how that our Congressional delegation, state legislators, county and city officials are raising hell, suddenly they want to hold a meeting - no doubt to sell us on the idea that this move to save six million dollars annually really is a reasonable idea.

I’d say, save your breath. It’s ignorant, it’s insulting and it seems to ignore the fact that every year, the helicopter crew saves half a dozen or more lives and on an average is dispatched close to 50 times.

**Tracy Shaw**, representing the Seal Rock Fire District, spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S.C.G. Air Facility in Newport. He submitted the following letter, addressed to Rear Admiral Gromlich, for the record:

“This letter is a request for reconsideration on the Coast Guard’s decision to remove the rescue helicopter stationed in Newport, Oregon.

I am the Fire Chief of Seal Rock Rural Fire Protection District, a position which the citizens of Seal Rock continue to rely on for their safety. Every year, thousands of tourists travel our section of the Oregon coast, enjoying the scenic views, playing on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, fishing from charter fishing vessels, and utilizing their own watercraft for various other activities along the coast. As you are well aware, it takes teamwork to keep our citizens safe. The team that is in place on the coast to help maintain their safety includes a variety of dedicated and trained personnel, my District's jet-skis, your ships, and your rescue helicopter. Eliminating the helicopter breaks an important part of that chain and puts my personnel at increased risk of injury or death. That increased risk forces us to rethink our rescue protocols, perhaps resulting in increased water-related deaths.

Our water rescue mission is accomplished with personal watercraft. We rescue victims from the surf line to deep water; places where your ships cannot navigate. We count on our US Coast Guard partners as backup when we are in the water. In a rescue situation, we have two personal watercraft and two or three trained firefighters in the water. This is risky work. They rely on your helicopter being there should they have any problems or need assistance to affect a rescue. For example, we had a recent mission to rescue four individuals on a sailboat that ran aground. This call was at dusk and without the lighting from your helicopter, we would have not been able to safely rescue those people from the vessel. In other cases, people frequently venture onto rocks in the surf, places we cannot reach by rope or personal watercraft. The only way to rescue those people is with the helicopter. Just like many in boats, these people are not usually dressed appropriately for cold water and wet weather, so hypothermia sets in within minutes. Having your helicopter stationed close by permits their rescue before they succumb to the cold.

Although the number of rescues in this area appear to be small (18 in the last year), in the grand scheme of things how insignificant is one life saved. This aircraft is irreplaceable. A fire protection district funded by 1,600 residents does not have the resources to fund a similar service that highly trained U.S. Coast Guard personnel and this aircraft currently provide.

The Fire Service's mission is to save lives and protect property. We thought the U.S. Coast Guard's mission was complementary to our own.

If there is anything we can do to help reverse this decision, do not hesitate to contact us.

I thank you for your dedication and service to our country."

**Rob Murphy**, Fire Chief for the City of Newport, spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. He reported that the Newport Fire Department is also comprised of rescuers, but that it is primarily responsible for the local area. He noted that the department prioritizes public safety as its number one mission, and does not understand why the federal government does not prioritize in this manner as well. He asked how much a life is worth.

Murphy submitted the following letter, to Rear Admiral Gromlich, into the record:

"I am asking you to reconsider your agency's decision to remove the rescue helicopter stationed in Newport, Oregon. To be blunt, this decision will greatly increase the chances of loss of life, despite still meeting the national response criteria of two hours. The added hour of response time to fly from Astoria or North Bend will translate directly into delayed medical care for the seriously injured, increased hypothermia for those who are rescued alive, and for many who can't survive the extra hour in our frigid waters, they shall perish.

The USCG rescue helicopter and the fine men and women trained to operate it represent a unique and irreplaceable emergency resource. There is simply nothing local emergency agencies can do to replace that resource that will soon be over an hour away. As you well know, in the business of emergency response, time is critical. A delayed response can decrease survival rates exponentially. Our agency responds with the Coast Guard dozens of times in an average year. This year, we have responded with the Coast Guard 18 times. Since 2004, we have responded with the Coast Guard 87 times; most of those responses have involved the helicopter from Newport. The responders of Station Yaquina Bay and the Newport Airport Coast Guard aircrew are a valuable part of the local emergency response community. There are some victims that we cannot access by foot or rope, and the station boats can't get in close enough to shore. There have been several incidents where we have used the helicopter to rescue victims on the ends of the jetty. Often this is the only means to remove these victims due to the dangers of having to move an injured victim over the rocks of the outer jetties. Their lives rest in the hands of a Coast Guard aircrew who can reach them before the tide, hypothermia, or increased injury can.

It should be noted that aside from assisting in surf rescues, cliff rescues, missing diver/hiker/swimmer events, and marine emergencies, the rescue helicopter has another important function: they are often the only ones capable of rescuing our responders should something go horribly wrong. The Station Yaquina Bay boat and beach crews, our firefighters, local and state police, all rely on knowing there is a nearby and timely helicopter rescue response available. The decision to move this resource further away adds considerable risk for local responders from all agencies and may result in a lower level of response from local responders due to safety concerns resulting from this closure.

Those of us on the ground here know that having the helicopter stationed in Newport has saved lives; we have seen it with our own eyes, time and time again. We are understandably stunned by this decision, and respectfully request that you reconsider it. No one wants to rewrite this request each time a life is lost that we know could have been saved if the helicopter would have arrived in 15 minutes instead of over an hour.

I have spoken with several Fire Chiefs in Lincoln County and they all share my view, including Chief Tracy Shaw of Seal Rock Fire District, and Chief Don Baker of North Lincoln Fire and Rescue in Lincoln City. They have also written letters opposed to the removal of the Newport Helicopter. I sincerely hope you reconsider your decision to close the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station at Newport, Oregon. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you. Thank you for your consideration.”

**Robert Waddell**, representing Tradewinds Charters, spoke in opposition to the decision to remove the U.S.C.G. Air Facility from Newport. He reported that this company serves more than 10,000 customers annually. He stated that additionally, there are more than 100,000 recreational and sport fishing customers annually. He reported that Newport is the largest commercial port in Oregon and that the numbers should speak for themselves.

**Mark Marks**, a research biologist, spoke in opposition to the decision to remove the U.S.C.G. Air Facility from Newport. He reported that in addition to commercial, sport, and recreational fishing, and beach-goers, there is a large scientific community that depends on the U.S.C.G. helicopter. He stated that there need to be rescue assets on the ground

here, and the he cannot fathom the logic in removing the helicopter from Newport. He urged the decision be overturned.

**Kinder Cottrell**, a commercial fisherman, spoke in opposition to the decision to remove the U.S.C.G. Air Facility from Newport. He stated that the helicopter is what saves fishermen on the water and urged that it be kept in Newport. He reported that in the early 1980's, the loss of life in the Bering Sea led to the implementation of rules and regulations for fishermen, including requirements for EPIRBS, personal flotation devices, life rafts, survival suits, and additional training. He stated that what is the easiest is not always the best. He added that everyone is willing to help look for a solution, but asked that the situation be remedied.

**Dennis Bishop** spoke in opposition to the decision to remove the U.S.C.G. Air Facility from Newport. He stated that the Coast Guard helicopter is a must. He added that survival time at sea is at best 30 to 45 minutes, and response time is the difference between survival and recovery. He noted that the government has regulated many safety issues for boats, and the removal of the helicopter would be the removal of the only safety net that is proven and tested. He stated that commercial fishermen have training in safety, gear, and knowledge, but sport boats have no such training, and virtually no equipment to survive once in the water. He added that there are better places to cut costs rather than cutting the chances of survival of someone trying to make a living in an industry that already has its share of hazardous conditions. He cited as an example, the people who had to be rescued at Fogarty Creek last week. He stated that the closure of the air facility is a death sentence to many people.

**Sylvia Pauley**, a groundfish observer out of Newport, stated that in her profession, she has a personal bias in keeping the air facility open. She suggested that in addition to the obvious lifesaving capabilities provided by the helicopter, it is also a benefit to homeland security and fisheries enforcement. She urged the Coast Guard to find the funding to keep the air station open.

**Alan Holzapfel** stated that he and his wife are residents of Cascade Head Ranch overlooking the Salmon River bar. He stated that they have personally witnessed several rescues from Cascade Head and the Three Rocks area. He added that the Salmon River estuary is heavily used by fishermen, crabbers, kayakers, boaters, and other recreational water craft, and many are using the Knight Park County boat ramp for access to the ocean. He apologized to the local Coast Guard personnel who are actually responsible for providing the all-important lifesaving mission, to have to bear the brunt of public outrage over the proposed closure of the Newport air facility. He asked, other than Admiral Gromlich, where the Coast Guard staffers are who put this ill-conceived idea together. He stated that they are the people who should hear this testimony and take into account the results of their proposed action. He added that, as a former search and rescue helicopter pilot, he would be pleased to take issue with the budget data supporting this proposed action. He stated that even without having access to it, he could state with certainty that the increased response time to Cascade Head Ranch, Three Rocks, and Newport, from either North Bend or Astoria would not only increase fuel costs for each response, but would provide a much reduced time on station for any rescue attempts. He stated that he

fully supports Ms. Eder's suggested budget review items. He added that the whole issue has already been most eloquently set forth by Lori Tobias in the October 17 issue of the Oregon Coast Today which he would like to enter into the written testimony a copy of here article which says, in part, "with regard to trying to convince the local citizens of the estimated six million dollar savings, Ms. Tobias says, "I'd say, save your breath. It's ignorant, it's insulting, and it seems to ignore the fact that every year, the helicopter crew saves half a dozen or more lives and on average is dispatched close to 50 times."

The article from Oregon Coast Today, written by Lori Tobias, and entitled "Up in the Air" which was entered into the record by Alan Holzapfel follows:

"There were four of us on the little plane flying back from a press trip to an island off the coast of Australia.

The pilot sat in front of me. Arlyn, a writer from the James Beard Foundation, was beside me and behind us was a woman from China who had given herself the American moniker Belinda Sunshine. It was growing dark, nothing but water below us. Suddenly, Arlyn grabbed my arm and turning to me, demanded in her New Yorkese, "Whatsa matta with the pilot?"

"What do you mean, what's the matter with the pilot," I asked.

"He's slumped over the wheel," she said.

I leaned forward and sure enough, it appeared she was right. In that instant, I felt a terror like I'd never known as I grasped the reality that there was no one going to walk on that plane and rescue us.

We were on our own. Me, Arlyn and Belinda Sunshine. I have never felt so helpless in my life.

Helpless. It's a good word to describe how many are feeling on the Central Oregon Coast these days since the U.S. Coast Guard announced it will close down the Newport Air Station Nov. 30 - the day before the start of crabbing season, a season that often sees the loss of at least one fishing vessel and the call to rescue others.

With the closure, helicopter help will be at least an hour away. By then, it will likely be recovery operation rather than a rescue.

And it's not just the fishing fleet that will be imperiled. Barely a week after the announcement, the helicopter crew plucked five tourists from the rock at Fogarty Creek. If they'd had to wait an hour, the surf no doubt would have already washed them away.

And consider this note posted on Facebook from a man who identified himself as a retired Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmer: ". . . I've spent many nights at that facility, responded to boaters in distress, pulled men with broken bones out of the surrounding forests and at the base of cliffs. I have friends that have been lowered into Devil's Punchbowl to rescue a surfer that couldn't have held on the time it would take to respond from North Bend. I've looked into the faces of family members of victims that may have been survivors if I had gotten there sooner."

The air station in Newport opened in 1987 - thanks to the Newport Fishermen's Wives and others in the community. That effort came after three fishermen died when the F/V Lasseigne went down. Ginny Goblirsch, former president of the Newport Fishermen's Wives, told me the call for help came at 7:33 A.M. By the time the helicopter arrived, it was 8:33 A.M. Two men were dead of hypothermia; the third was never found.

It took an Act of Congress in 1986 to open the air station.

I was lucky that evening in Australia. Reacting purely on instinct, I grabbed the pilot's shoulder and demanded, "What's the matter with you?"

He turned slowly in his sea, "I was writing in my log book," he said, none too happily. We landed safely with a nervous laugh and a story to tell.

I like to think this story, too, will end on an up note, and in the future we'll share our own tale of the little town that could - and did.

On the other hand, nearly 30 years ago, it took an Act of Congress. Works for me."

**Lindsay Clark** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. She stated that she has lived in Newport for 63 years and has personally witnessed the helicopter rescuing a tourist. She noted that her grandfather was a commercial fisherman, and her son has been a commercial fisherman for 19 years here and in Alaska. She stated that we need to maintain the helicopter in Newport, adding that the logging community also uses the helicopter for serious accidents. She noted that when she walks down the Fishermen's Walk, she hopes that no more names will be added due to the lack of a helicopter.

**Terry Obteshka** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. He expressed thanks for the opportunity to express his concerns about the Coast Guard's decision to close down its Newport air rescue facility. He stated that he is a Newport resident, commercial fisherman, sport fisherman, and small business owner. He noted that those who depend on the Coast Guard are his friends and neighbors. He added that he served 18 months on the Coast Guard Cutter Storis out of Kodiak, Alaska. He stated that he participated in search and rescue and medivac missions on the Bering Sea. He noted that he is a strong advocate of the Coast Guard and its mission to saving lives and property at sea. He stated that his concern is that this is the first time that he has personally witnessed budgetary concerns trumping public safety. He added that closing down the air rescue facility is shortsighted and ignorant to the facts and will probably result in loss of life. He encouraged the Coast Guard to step back and research the success stories resulting from the quick response by the local helicopter. He stated that Newport is home to Oregon's largest offshore commercial fishing fleet; thousands of sport boats fishing out of Newport during the summer, many of which go up to 60 miles offshore for tuna; and other ocean users including surfers, beachcombers, and visitors playing in the water. He noted, in closing, that Newport has had a great relationship with the Coast Guard; Newport is a Coast Guard City; and six million dollars is pocket change. He asked that on behalf of Newport's hardworking commercial fishermen, sport fishermen, surfers, and other ocean users that the Coast Guard rescind its decision to close Newport's air rescue facility. He stated that this is a safety issue; not a budget issue.

**Mike Pettis** stated that he comes from a commercial fishing family. He reported that commercial fishermen have updated equipment for a better chance of survival; they participate in classes and drills; and have their vessels boarded by the Coast Guard for compliance checks. He asked that the Coast Guard reconsider its decision to remove the helicopter as this is the best chance of survival.

**Bruce Mate**, Director of the Marine Mammal Institute at the Hatfield Marine Science Center, spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility

in Newport. He stated that he has researchers and students going to sea in OSU's 85 foot vessel, Pacific Storm. He added that this summer, the boat responded to a mayday message from a 75 foot fiberglass vessel just 1.5 miles away in Southern California, and reached three folks as their vessel burned to the water line in eight minutes. He stated that he is also an instrument-rated pilot who flies over the ocean looking for small and large mammals at sea, so he is aware of some of the challenges of spotting. He reported that students are trained with a head-sized object to show how fast such things disappear. He stated that time is the enemy. Mate reported that his wife is a retired intensive care nurse who has told him many times that a potential victim is not dead until they are "warm and dead." He emphasized that getting potential victims to our hospital, via helicopter, is part of the critical link of changing the outcome. He added that it is fair to say that the way the federal (or President's) budget gets made is that agencies offer up the programs that they least value. He stated that he is aware that the Coast Guard representatives in attendance were not those who made such value decisions, but that some folks "upstream" have made that judgment. He noted that this is not a partisan issue, it is a safety and humanitarian issue. He reported that OMSI is building a facility, in Newport, to educate kids about the sea. He added that OSU is developing a Marine Studies Initiative to bring 500 of our sons and daughters to Newport to learn about the ocean. He stated that some of these kids will be too naïve and will be at risk. He added that as an ocean user, an employer who sends folks to sea, and a friend and neighbor of central coast fishermen, the Coast Guard finds the means to keep the helicopters in in Newport where it is needed and respected.

**Dac Wilde** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. He stated that the Coast Guard is an integral part of existence on the central Oregon coast, and is appreciated.

**Wessel Lewis** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. He stated that he is a fisherman and a deckhand on a boat. He stated that he is one of those saved by the Coast Guard and noted that closing the air facility means a death sentence.

**Marvin Sannas** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. He stated that he is a sailor, and that the Coast Guard has lost sight of its mission.

**Terry Thompson**, Lincoln County Commissioner and commercial fisherman, recommended that the Coast Guard not get in a fight with the community, but rather to same time, money, and grief, because the community will win this.

**Jessie Burrows** spoke in opposition to the announced closure of the U.S. Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport. She read the following from a plaque located at the seawall in Depoe Bay, "To the sons and daughters of Depoe Bay: The courage to succeed. The sea is dangerous and the storms terrible, but the obstacles have never been sufficient reason to remain ashore. It is with an iron will that they embark on the most daring of all endeavors. To meet the shadowy future without fear and conquer the unknown. In memory of Richard Staunten." Burrows stated that she feels that fishing has been our

proud heritage. She noted that the longstanding tradition of bringing in sustenance through commercial fishing is at the cost of our fellow man. She added that we never know if these people will come home, but we go on with courage and with pride. She stated that knowing the traditions and commerce outweigh the risks. She added that we give our lives to provide the products people enjoy in local restaurants and beyond. She reported that she saw three men going down who were pulled from the freezing winter waters by the helicopter. She added that they were hypothermic and had only minutes to live. She stated that Depoe Bay is one of the most dangerous channels to pass through. She noted, in closing, that besides unwitting visitors who don't understand our treacherous waters, we stand to lose so many more husbands, sons, daughters, and wives.

**Bob Jacobson** stated that he fished commercially for forty years in the Bering Sea, Oregon, and Washington, and the toughest thing to deal with are the accidental deaths in the industry. He added that fishermen are very competitive, but when it comes to safety, will help a fellow fisherman. He stated that they expect the same of the Coast Guard. He reiterated that the Coast Guard helicopter offers the best chance for survival in event of an accident. He stated that there were outstanding presentations this evening, and urged everyone to keep the e-mails and other communications coming to continue the awareness of the concern regarding the closure of the Coast Guard Air Facility in Newport.

#### **WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED DURING THE MEETING**

The following written comments were received at the meeting:

From the **Tillamook County Fire Defense Board**:

"It is the position of the Tillamook County Fire Defense Board that we express our concern and disapproval with the decision to remove the USCG rescue helicopter from Newport, Oregon.

The question or concern is how many lives may be sacrificed due to this decision?

The removal of the rescue helicopter from Newport will have an effect on public safety for the entire central coast of Oregon. With helicopters from Astoria and North Bend now required to cover the central coast, adequacy of coverage will decrease while response times increase. Increased areas of responsibility will increase response time, inevitably contributing to potential loss of human life.

Tillamook County is well experienced as Lincoln County, in the number of incidents annually requiring the assistance of the USCG. Their response and resources come from various locations adequately spaced along the Oregon coast to ensure the highest level of service for the preservation of human life.

Please reconsider this decision and look for alternative areas to save budget dollars without risking the lives of Oregonians."

From **Jim Kusz**, District Captain, North Lincoln Fire and Rescue District #1:

"The USCG helicopter in Newport gives me, as District Safety Officer and former Water Rescue Team Leader "peace of mind;" the absence of a local air asset not only may greatly increase the potential for death to exposure with our fleet of fishermen, surfers

and recreational ocean-going tourists; it puts all our coastal rescuers at higher risk. This change (if it occurs) will spark discussion with our operations I'm sure; since it is part of our protocol to contact the Coast Guard whenever we launch our Surf Rescue PWC's (Personal Water Craft) Kawasaki "Jet Skis" for a rescue. We've trained with the Coast Guard and have come to expect our USCG partners to be our guardians and lifeguards so that we can safely and more aggressively complete our mission in water rescue and often assist in areas that surface teams or water rescue personnel cannot reach in areas in coves or rocks. More importantly may be the rapid response we've had with non-water rescues; search and rescue of lost hunters; steep angle cliff rescues; and extraction of seriously injured loggers in difficult terrain.

There is no greater tool for spotting a victim in the water or on land than the USCG helicopter, through coordinated efforts the USCG air operations have greatly aided our agency and other fire districts along the coast.

Finally, it is North Lincoln Fire and Rescue's policy in high surf conditions and in severe weather NOT to launch a rescue PWC until we have confirmed visually the location of the victim or victims, from the shore (usually high vantage point) or from the air in communications with the USCG HH-65 helicopter. A PWC in the open ocean can be within feet of a victim and never even see them, even in small ocean swells. District Thirteen is an extremely dangerous geographic part of the USCG nationwide mission and their aid to our efforts and our rescuers safety is "mission critical."

We hope that the USCG air support remains on the central Oregon coast!"

From Laurel Kincl:

"As a private citizen, I urge you to do the right thing and provide appropriate rescue services for Newport. As a health and safety professional, I work with the fishermen to protect and prevent injuries and fatalities. As they do their part to prevent disasters, they still need the service to rescue them. Please reconsider and keep the helo in Newport."

From Laura Syron:

"As a public health professional, I believe the decision to close the air station will harm the community. Please reconsider."

From: William D. Bain:

As an active duty Naval officer, I was supply officer of the USS Walker based at Long Beach, and subsequently assistant supply and fiscal officer at the Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey. I continued my service for 25 years more, retiring in 1990 at the rank of SC Captain, and was often involved in budgeting and service delivery, including training, readiness, and support of the U.S. Navy and reserve components.

Budgetary decisions in normal times are never fun. In tight times, they are near impossible, but still must be made. There are always "trade-offs" - and it is unthinkable to have a trade-off of lost lives of mariners to effect a "saving" in closing the Newport Coast Guard Air Facility. For that matter, there are other means at hand to rebalance the funds, as additional flight hours will be absolutely required, with even fewer aircraft, and stretched personnel, putting all at risk, not just the threatened mariners who can be put in

harm's way all too easily. The net savings simply cannot be the final number! If desired, I would be happy to take a "recall" to duty to assist the USCG leadership in finding solutions to these challenges."

From Gretchen Kzebier:

"I work at the Yaquina head Outstanding Natural Area BLM and can tell you if it weren't for the helo, I don't know how the surfers that frequently get stranded on the rocks off of Yaquina Head would have been rescued. These are cliffs with rocky edges that create large waves inaccessible to swimmer and boat rescue."

### ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 P.M.