

Rural Business and Cooperative Service • Value Added Producer Grant Program

Rural Fishers Tap Local Foods Market

The commercial fishers in the small southern Oregon coastal community of Port Orford were reliant on the corporate model to sell their catch.

“The fishermen here are fiercely individualist and there’s all kinds of characters,” said Aaron Longton, captain of the Goldeneye. “But when it comes right down to it, we all have the same needs. We want a secure marketplace. We want to have some control over pricing and who we sell our fish to.”

Aaron helped to establish an employee-owned cooperative that distributes local products throughout western Oregon and provides uniform marketing. This mid-tier value chain helped local fishers earn more for their products by advertising their sustainable practices and providing detailed information about the species and its point of origin, information that is increasingly in demand by consumers. “We have 74 species of rockfish here,” Aaron explained. “In the commodity system, they’re called ‘snapper.’ So you never know if you’re eating one that’s abundant or nearly over-fished.” Port Orford Sustainable Seafood enables local fishers to address this concern for their customers.



Port Orford Sustainable Seafood helps local, small-town fishers market and sell their products.

The community-supported fishery (CSF) began operation 10 years ago, but struggled to succeed using systems not designed for fishers. The local nonprofit Ecotrust recommended USDA’s [Value Added Producer Grant Program](#).

“We found USDA very accessible,” said Leesa Cobb, co-founder of Port Orford Sustainable Seafood. “I really want to encourage producers, fishers, and farmers to apply for this grant. It’s very much worth your time.”

USDA awarded a \$250,000 grant that enabled the CSF to adopt an online fish store created by Skipper Otto CSF in Vancouver, BC, that allows them to more efficiently manage their customer base. They created a new, professional [website](#). They updated their brand with informative, engaging labels that introduce their customers to the captain and boat that caught the fish. And the grant provided additional working capital for the cooperative.

“The grant helped us through the low point while we were tooling up the new system,” said Aaron. “I thank USDA for stepping up.” By helping local fishers increase the value of their products, the CSF is creating jobs and improving the economic vitality of this small, coastal community.

Obligation Amount:	\$250,000 grant
Date of Obligation:	September 2016
Congressional District:	Representative DeFazio, District 02; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Partners:	Rogue Community Credit Union (\$304,826 matching funds), Business Oregon (match guarantee)
Demographics:	Port Orford, Oregon; population 1,142
Impact:	A community-supported fishery is helping to preserve and create jobs in the small coastal town of Port Orford while increasing revenue entering the community and improving its economic vitality.
