

**Joint news release**

Oregon Department of Transportation  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
North Coast Land Conservancy  
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2015

**Contacts:**

Pat Moran, Oregon Department of Transportation, 503-986-4261  
Dawn Harris, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 541-867-4550  
Katie Voelke, North Coast Land Conservancy, 503-738-9126  
Chris Havel, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 503-986-0722

**Whale Cove Protected as part of Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge thanks to a diverse partnership**

Depoe Bay OR –The land around Whale Cove on the central Oregon Coast is now a protected part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge thanks to a partnership between the property owner and federal, state, and nonprofit organizations. The 13.97-acre property in Lincoln County is two miles south of Depoe Bay, and surrounds the oldest marine reserve in Oregon where all marine life is protected. The site will be managed for its natural resource values and to protect Whale Cove's ecology. The cove provides scenic views from nearby Rocky Creek State Park and US Highway 101.

The deal closed on December 31, 2014 thanks to support from the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Federal Highway Administration, (FHWA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the nonprofit North Coast Land Conservancy, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), and property owners Bryce and Beebe Buchanan. The property was valued at \$2,250,000; however, the owners donated \$1,150,000 by reducing the sale price for the property, accepting \$1.1 million. The Buchanans originally purchased this portion of Whale Cove to conserve it; previous to their owning it there were multiple high-density development proposals for the land. The FHWA awarded a Scenic Byways Grant for \$650,000 in 2008 to purchase the property. OPRD provided \$450,000 in matching funds through Bandon Biota, an Oregon business. Neal Maine with The North Coast Land Conservancy played a pivotal role in applying for the federal funding and negotiating a deal with the Buchanans. ODOT coordinated the scenic byways funding, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to take ownership of the property and manage the site in perpetuity.

"Seldom do you find an Oregon citizen like Bryce, who not only intentionally buys land for the purpose of conservation, but then has the patience and fortitude to work for more than a decade with multiple government agencies to achieve the goal of preservation," says Neal Maine with the North Coast Land Conservancy.

"We are grateful to the partnerships that have resulted in this new addition to Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge." said Rebecca Chuck, Refuge Manager for the USFWS "Refuge designation will provide an undisturbed upland buffer to the marine resources of the cove in addition to added protection for the nesting seabirds and marine mammals.

As part of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Whale Cove will protect habitat for nesting seabirds including black oystercatcher, pigeon guillemot, pelagic cormorant, and western gull along with bald eagle and many species of songbirds. The cove also provides resting and pupping habitat that is used by over 100 Harbor Seals year-round. People will be able to enjoy the scenery from the nearby state park viewpoint, and by paddling in from Depoe Bay. USFWS staff and volunteers will focus on removing invasive plant species, especially English ivy, to improve the forested areas for wildlife.

Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 762 acres of coastal rocks, islands and headlands along 320 miles of the Oregon coastline. The refuge provides nesting habitat for most of Oregon's 1.2 million nesting seabirds, and a large percentage of Oregon's seal and sea lion population use the refuge to rest and produce their young.

###

**Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOGLiiGQOVA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdoU1TvsFu8>

**Photos:**

whale-cove-aerial.jpg (courtesy Bryce Buchanan)

whale-cove-landscape.jpg (courtesy Bryce Buchanan)

whale-cove-map.jpg

**External quotes:**

J.J. Gonor, a scientist at the O.S.U. College of Oceanography: "I consider the Cove as especially valuable, not only because it is in an essentially natural state, but because it is virtually the only such semi-enclosed marine cove of any size in this condition on the Oregon coast. Whale Cove would make a good reserve because its geography lends itself to access control, important in managing an area to retain undisturbed conditions.

David Fox, from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife: "It offers researchers and resource managers the only virgin cove in Oregon, providing important baseline information for monitoring natural fluctuations in marine populations and for assessing impacts to marine resources in other areas. Oregon State University researchers have been studying the population of Red Urchins living in Whale Cove. It appears to be the only population remaining in Oregon that has not been altered by commercial harvest. It is a remnant of a mature urchin population where individual urchins can be in excess of 80 years old. Whale Cove's rocky intertidal community is rich and diverse. In the absence of human trampling and harvest the intertidal community reaches its full potential. Harbor seals haul out on the Cove's rocky bench, protected from harsh ocean conditions and human disturbance. The rocky intertidal

habitat and harbor seals within Whale Cove would likely be the most affected by development as human activity along the Cove's shore increases."

Samuel Johnson, former Director of the Nature Conservancy in Oregon, letter dated August 3, 1986:  
"Whale Cove has one of the best examples of marine intertidal and subtidal communities on boulders and bedrock in Oregon. This type of community is considered a priority for protection."