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## Researchers Propose Seafloor Mapping Project

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Researchers say a proposed \$5.6m seafloor mapping project would benefit the region in a number of critical areas — including fisheries management, tsunami planning and the creation of marine reserves. The Oregon Ocean Policy Advisory Council unanimously endorsed the proposal and organizers now plan to take the idea to the State Land Board. Federal support also will be sought for the project. Researchers plan to use sophisticated sonar to produce a highly detailed map of the three-mile wide strip of ocean floor along the Oregon coastline. About 95 percent of the Oregon territorial sea is known only by crude depth charts and contours, researchers say. They want a clear picture of a sea floor dominated by ridges, valleys, rockpiles and various marine habitats that are known for only a tiny fraction of the area that is regulated by the state. The project is being developed by Mark Hixon, an Oregon State University professor of zoology, and led by Chris Goldfinger, a professor of oceanic and atmospheric sciences, and Dawn Wright, professor of geosciences. The three are experts in seafloor mapping, habitat characterization, and earthquakes and tsunamis. Costs could be kept down by using idled fishing vessels, supporters say, and advances in technology could yield maps of exceptional detail that would once have been too expensive to make. Scientists say that understanding the nature of Oregon's territorial sea is critical to sustaining sport and commercial fisheries, coastal tourism, and the ocean ecosystem.



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