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Resuscitating Our Seas; Noted UNH Oceans Expert To Address Annual AAAS Meeting

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DURHAM, N.H. - Using the techniques of modern science alongside an historical understanding of the plentiful oceans from bygone days, University of New Hampshire ocean policy and fisheries expert Andrew A. Rosenberg will help address the issue of how to best protect and manage the planet's imperiled ocean resources at this year's American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting in Boston February 14-18.

Rosenberg, a professor at the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space and department of natural resources, and a former commissioner of the U. S. Commission on Ocean Policy, will both convene and present at multiple sessions, which vary topically but are centered around a common theme: the rich historical diversity of ocean ecosystems contrasted with the depleted seas of today.

"Clearly, ocean ecosystems were very much more productive in the past. We need to learn from our mistakes and find new approaches to foster recovery. Some progress has been made but there is a long way to go," Rosenberg says.

New approaches range from the continued refinement of fishing privileges to the emerging, all-encompassing method of "ecosystem-based management" of ocean resources.

Ecosystem-based management seeks to tie the disparate ocean-related puzzle pieces together so that policies put in place can be most effective when confronted with the inevitable trade-offs between ecosystem "services" - from seafood to erosion control to recreation.

"While it's certainly true that overfishing has been a major impact, so have coastal development, changes in river sources, changes in habitat, and other kinds of utilization and exploitation," says Rosenberg, who is also one of three senior scientists with the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea or COMPASS - a nationwide, collaborative effort dedicated to advancing and communicating marine conservation science.

The work Rosenberg is doing in conjunction with COMPASS will develop scientific advice for policymakers here in New England as well as nationally.

At the AAAS meeting, Rosenberg notes, "We'll be talking about how you go beyond the *concept* of everything being connected to figuring out how you implement a management system that is integrated and connected."

Just as climate change experts rely on computer simulations to forecast climate scenarios, ocean scientists will develop models to implement an ecosystem-based management approach.

Says Rosenberg, "And that's a big challenge. Where do you get the data? How do you create a model that's not so complex you have no confidence in the outputs?" He adds that an effort to

answer such questions is currently underway via a collaborative project with ocean experts all around New England, including himself and his Ph.D. student Verna DeLauer, who is working for COMPASS on a new integrated suite of models that can assess the true value of ecosystem services.

For details on the AAAS presentations, visit http://www.aaas.org/meetings/Annual_Meeting. For more on COMPASS visit <http://www.compassonline.org>.

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