

HMSC Visitor Center

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Highlights from a report on the economic impacts of the Visitor Center at the Hatfield Marine Science Center

Oregon Sea Grant operates the Visitor Center at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. Every year, about 150,000 people pass through the doors of the Visitor Center, where they can touch the sticky tentacles of sea anemones, crash simulated tsunami waves against Lego structures, marvel over model-sized fishing boats or watch an aquarist feed an octopus. A popular site with school groups, about 11,000 of the annual visitors are students and adults on field trips.

The Visitor Center is funded mainly by the federal government, Oregon State University and donations from visitors. It is staffed by Oregon Sea Grant faculty with the assistance of more than 60 volunteers.

In 2017, Oregon Sea Grant worked with OSU's Extension Service to estimate the Visitor Center's economic impact on Lincoln County and Oregon. One hundred thirty-one visitors were surveyed and the IMPLAN economic model was used to estimate the economic impacts. The model factored in salaries paid to people who work at the Visitor Center, the amount of money visitors spent on food and lodging, and household expenditures by Oregon Sea Grant employees and people who supplied goods and services linked to the Visitor Center.



High school students look at sea cucumbers in the touch tank at the HMSC Visitor Center. (Photo by Tiffany Woods)

The report found the following:

- For Lincoln County, the Visitor Center annually supports
 - **\$5.4 million** in income for Lincoln County residents,
 - **\$9.7 million** in sales for local businesses, and
 - **133 jobs.**
- Statewide, which includes Lincoln County, the Visitor Center annually supports
 - **\$7.6 million** in income for Oregon residents,
 - **\$13.2 million** in sales for Oregon businesses, and
 - **156 jobs.**
- **Thirty-nine percent** of the visitors surveyed said that half or more of their reason for coming to the Oregon coast was to visit the Visitor Center.
- The Visitor Center generates economic impacts that are more than **10 times its operating costs**. “Very few investments for economic development initiatives can produce a return of more than 10 times the investment,” the report said.
- The Visitor Center provides “**significant economic impacts** to Lincoln County and economic contributions to Oregon.”

The full report is on Oregon Sea Grant's website at <http://bit.ly/VisitorCenterReport>

