

# Feiro Marine Life Center Strategic Plan

2008-2013

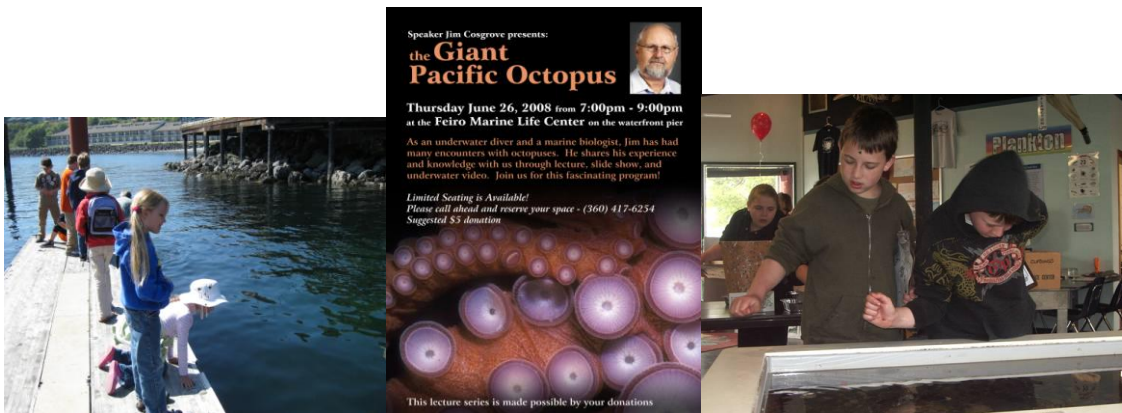


"...the go-to place on the north Olympic Peninsula for marine education. Feiro Marine Life Center helps people see beneath the surface and become stewards of our shared marine environment."

Feiro Marine Life Center Board of Director's Vision Statement, June 2008

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## Background

The Feiro Marine Life Center (FMLC), an educational and scientific organization promoting marine education and conservation, is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation that is centrally located on the waterfront of Port Angeles, Washington. Port Angeles, situated on the Strait of Juan de Fuca at the foot of the Olympic Mountains, is the county seat for Clallam County, the business and financial center for the North Olympic Peninsula, a gateway for visitors entering the country by ferry from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and the major entrance to Olympic National Park.

The FMLC is fondly known in the community as “the jewel of the waterfront.” It hosts public exhibits representative of the marine life inhabiting the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It provides classroom space for marine science related programs, and has a small library, specimen collection and laboratory for academic studies. The FMLC has sponsored community presentations by a number of world-renowned experts. Additional community educational programs for students of all ages are scheduled on a regular basis. The FMLC is open on weekends during the winter months and six days per week during the busy summer season. Over 10,000 visitors and students visit the center each year.

The FMLC facility was established in 1981 by the late Arthur D. Feiro. Art was a high school science teacher, and later the Dean of Students at Peninsula College, who recognized the value of a place on the Port Angeles waterfront to introduce children and residents of the Port Angeles community to the marine environment he so loved. He also recognized the educational value of this small aquarium to visitors who pass through the city by the thousands each summer. Art and his cadre of volunteers conducted numerous community fundraisers, built lasting partnerships in the community, and created the FMLC to teach all those who pass through its doors the wonders of the ocean. Art envisioned the FMLC as “... (a) multifaceted, dynamic, living, breathing facility .... (providing a) public display of marine organisms and ecosystems, a teaching laboratory, a public center for marine studies and a point of interest for tourists.” Since it opened its doors in 1981 the FMLC has successfully met these objectives.

### **SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS**

The Olympic Peninsula is host to a number of small marine science education facilities. Each has its own unique focus and provides marine science education programming to residents and visitors. The success of these facilities is attributed to funding support through their nonprofit status, and to their ability to provide quality education programs to the public schools and the community at large.

These facilities include:

- Port Townsend Marine Science Center (PTMSC) was established the same year as the Feiro Marine Life Center, but was established at its inception as a

nonprofit organization. The PTMSC offers exemplary programming to the community and to visitors, including school education programs, summer camps and special interest speakers. Eighty percent of PTSMC's operating costs are derived from program fees. They have also successfully secured funds from several larger foundations, and are partners with the Burke Museum.

- Poulsbo Marine Science Center (PMSC) has a history similar to that of the FMLC. It was initially managed and financially supported by the City of Poulsbo. The school district also supported the facility and covered the cost of all public school education programs. Both of these entities were unable to support the PMSC and the facility closed its doors for two years while developing their nonprofit status and engaging in successful fundraising efforts. The PMSC has received significant state funding, NOAA funding and funding from the Blank Foundation. They have been able to update the facility and hired new staff.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Over the years, FMLC has been admirably supported by the City of Port Angeles (City) and Peninsula College (College). Both the City and College now face increasing demands on their limited funding, bringing their continued funding of the FMLC into question and the FMLC to a pivotal point in its history.

To address this issue, a steering committee, the Marine Science Initiative, was appointed in March, 2007. This committee was led by College staff and consisted of engaged individuals, local citizen groups and government agencies. It discussed and made recommendations for the future of the FMLC. This committee recommended that the FMLC become a nonprofit, independent, entity supervised by a board of directors. Its mission would be **“to foster the understanding of and a commitment to the health of the marine environment and related watersheds of the Olympic Peninsula, and their importance to its communities.”**

For a limited time, the FMLC continues to be supported, both fiscally and administratively, by the City and College. The City retains ownership of the facility and is contributing \$45,000 for staffing in 2008. The College contributes \$15,000 annually to supplement the staffing costs and provides administrative services for the staff. The current funding level supports one 3/4 –time staff position and one 1/4 –time staff position as well as three seasonal positions during the summer visitor season from mid-May through mid-September. The City and the College have signed an inter-local agreement of support for the FMLC for 2008. Recently, the board of directors hired an administrator/educational director whose salary will reflect on going fund raising efforts.

Very clearly, the FLMC is in transition. The most urgent need is to smoothly move toward establishing a self-sufficient, non-profit entity, under the direction of the recently appointed board of directors, to secure sufficient funding to continue existing programs, and to develop a realistic approach to expand Art Feiro's vision for the future.

This strategic plan is intended to guide this transition and the FMLC's work for the next three to five years. It will include specific goals to upgrade facilities, enhance educational outreach, explore research partnership opportunities, and grow into a more vital and visible destination for resident and non-resident visitors.

The purpose of this plan is twofold. First, a document is needed that clarifies a vision and sets future goals for the FLMC and provides a detailed blueprint to guide the board of directors and staff as they move forward to implement the vision and goals. Second, an executive summary of the plan will be produced for use in seeking grants and other sources of funding while presenting a vision of the future to a broader audience. It is anticipated that this strategic plan will be a 'living' document in that it will need periodic review over a period of 3-5 years, at which time a new strategic plan may be appropriate.

For the purposes of this plan, the word community will be used in describing the population of the North Olympic Peninsula.

## **OUR STRATEGY**

Six strategic goals have been identified in this document together with a number of objectives offering specific targets for each goal. Each of these goals is important, and will be aggressively pursued during the life of this plan.

However, given the immediate needs of becoming a functional, independent, non-profit organization, for the immediate future the principle strategy will be twofold: to stabilize and strengthen the institutional capacity of the FMLC, and to incrementally build on the success of the existing programs.

## **ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SITUATION**

### **STRENGTHS**

#### **Administrative Infrastructure**

- Non-profit status in place offering flexibility in seeking funding sources
- Active component of the local community
- Community support from diverse groups and individuals
- Enthusiastic and versatile board of directors well connected with a wide cross section of the community
- Legal, fiscal, research and education expertise among board members

**Fiscal**

- 501(c) (3) status established
- Grant application process ongoing

**Physical Plant**

- Innovative water system for aquarium exhibits allowing water to be pumped directly from the harbor, through the exhibits and back into the harbor
- Prime location on the Port Angeles waterfront
- Interactive exhibits including touch tanks and aquaria

**Office Area**

- Flexible classroom area
- Audio-visual equipment including laptop computer, projector, and large TV with DVD and VHS capabilities
- Teaching laboratory with 10 compound microscopes and 12 dissecting scopes
- Small laboratory area available for research

**Staff**

- Dedicated staff with diverse capabilities committed to making the FMLC successful
- AmeriCorps and interns available as a talented and inexpensive addition to staff

**Volunteers**

- Strong group of dedicated, versatile and well educated volunteers
- Growing retirement communities on the North Olympic Peninsula provide potential volunteer source

**Education Outreach**

- Established outreach program for elementary schools that served over 600 students in 2007
- Partnership with other education facilities (Seattle Aquarium, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, Port Angeles School District, Olympic Park Institute) for curriculum and staff support

**Research and Partnerships**

- Variety of marine and terrestrial ecosystems are located nearby
- Long standing association with Battelle (an international science and technology corporation with a lab and offices located in Sequim), Peninsula College and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
- Strong board and community support for additional partnering efforts
- Support of citizen science organizations such as Streamkeepers

## **Visitation**

- Over 27 years of visitor and public service; FMLC now hosts an average of 10,000 visitors and up to 1,000 students each year
- Daily Port Angeles-Victoria ferries bring visitors to the waterfront
- Port Angeles is a primary gateway to the Olympic Peninsula and Olympic National Park

## **WEAKNESSES**

### **Administrative Infrastructure**

- Transition from City and College management to non-profit management interim period is the initial challenge

### **Fiscal**

- Current sources of income (City and College) to be at least partially removed in 2009
- Small and uncertain base of recurrent funding
- Lack of diversity of funding sources

### **Physical Plant**

- Monitoring and emergency notification system needed to detect water system failure
- Facility has changed little over the past 27 years; needs updated appearance, state of the art displays, signage, etc. to make display area more aesthetically pleasing

### **Office Area**

- Much of the office equipment is nearing end of useful life, making administrative tasks difficult and time-consuming

### **Volunteers**

- More volunteers needed to effectively operate the FMLC as a public education facility

### **Staff**

- Additional staffing needed to effectively operate and meet organization goals

### **Education Outreach**

- Middle and high school students underserved by current program
- Current staffing levels make it impossible for FMLC to participate in science education committees

### **Research**

- FMLC does not have a track record as research facility
- Current space and facilities inadequate for a well-developed research program.

### **Visitation**

- Poor visibility to attract visitors
- Displays are outdated
- Insufficient promotional material

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Administrative Infrastructure**

- New nonprofit board is diverse and representative of a number of key stakeholders in the community.
- New board and expanded staff offer strong potential to set new direction for the future of the FMLC

### **Fiscal**

- Increased opportunities and latitude for funding through grants, community foundations, capital campaigns, planned giving, etc.

### **Physical Plant**

- Upgrading facilities offers opportunities to set an example in green technology, renewable energy, etc. in a very visible location
- Upgraded center will encourage visitation with potential to become a corner stone attraction for visitors and residents.
- Potential for FMLC to be center for all marine related information

### **Office Area**

- Potential for private businesses and organizations to donate labor to install updated equipment and renovate work space

### **Volunteers**

- Growing pool of retired professionals in community from which to recruit volunteers

### **Staff**

- With minimal staffing at present, we have the opportunity to identify priority needs and staffing as identified in this strategic plan

### **Education Outreach**

- With increased focus on ocean health, the FMLC is in a prime position to provide marine science education to all ages of students

- FMLC is in an excellent position to interpret environmental projects in the community, including removal of two dams on the Elwha River, Tsewhitzen, Rayonier Superfund Site, Puget Sound Partnership, etc.
- Expansion of existing website to strengthen educational and outreach elements

### **Research**

- The new board structure and potential growth provides an opportunity to work more closely with NOAA, Battelle, and Peninsula College to upgrade FMLC involvement in professional, student and citizen science research.

### **Visitation**

- Provide updated displays of ocean life
- Well-placed information and marketing efforts can result in increased visibility and awareness of the FMLC, making it another key destination for visitors to the North Olympic Peninsula
- Opportunity to provide interesting and relevant information about the health of the ocean and how each of us play a part in the future of the ocean

## **THREATS**

### **Administrative Infrastructure**

- The restructuring process will require substantial time and effort from the new board of directors and existing staff

### **Fiscal**

- Limited staff to apply for grants or other funding sources
- Grants are highly competitive and not a guarantee of future funding
- Very limited recurrent funding opportunities

### **Physical Plant**

- City and College lack resources to support changes in building appearance or floor layout
- Potential for contamination by combined sewage overflow events from nearby Peabody Creek

### **Office Area**

- City and College lack resources to support upgrade of computers, internet capabilities and office equipment

### **Volunteers**

- Difficult to maintain scheduling because of retired groups' vacation schedule, etc.

### **Staff**

- Establishing responsibility between staff when one individual has covered all positions for the past two years
- Inadequate and unpredictable funding limits recruitment options

### **Education Outreach**

- Public schools have limited resources to work with the FMLC in development and implementation of K-12 programming
- Recurrent funding is not secured for K-12 programming

### **Research**

- Battelle and Peninsula College have established research facilities with modern laboratory equipment

### **Visitation**

- Visitor numbers to the North Olympic Peninsula have dropped slightly since the mid-1990s (is this really true?)
- Future non-resident visitor numbers are uncertain due to increased energy and other cost of living expenses

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal #1**

**Establish and maintain stable, functional, personnel, financial and administrative structure.**

Objectives:

- a. Develop an adequate level and flow of funding to support the mission and goals outlined in this plan
- b. Formalize agreements between the board of directors and other involved organizations
- c. Clarify staffing needs and individual staff authority and responsibilities

### **Goal #2**

**Maintain and strengthen the FMLC as a center for educating residents, visitors and students about the marine environment and the associated watersheds.**

Objectives:

- a. Expand and develop educational partnerships and programs with North Olympic Peninsula schools
- b. Provide timely interpretative material and displays for public

- c. Provide timely and relevant community education programs

**Goal#3**

**Encourage visitation and increase public awareness of the FMLC by strategic marketing and other means**

Objectives:

- a. Increase visitation to FMLC to 20,000 annually
- b. Increase participation in local festivals and events to increase public awareness
- c. Increase use of marketing materials to support goal

**Goal #4**

**Upgrade FMLC facilities, including displays, classrooms, and administrative space to appropriately address the goals and objectives presented in this strategic plan**

Objectives:

- a. Complete an intermediate facility upgrade
- b. Design and carry out an entire facility upgrade
- c. Embark on a capital fundraising campaign for upgrade

**Goal #5**

**Expand partnerships with civic, government, educational and research facilities in the North Olympic Peninsula**

Objectives:

- a. Develop working relationships with a variety of potential funding sources
- b. Build relationships with private and public groups e.g. Chamber of Commerce, PABA, PADA

**Goal #6**

**Establish FMLC as a center for research designed to offer opportunities to students, other scientific organizations in the region and to visiting professionals**

Objectives:

- a. Define potential roles for FMLC in promoting citizen science and scientific research on the North Olympic Peninsula
- b. Promote use of FMLC to citizen science and research groups