

WCMAC Discussion Guide - MSP Plan Research, Analysis and Development

Issue:

Addressing MSP plan development was a part of the required needs and estimated budget presented for MSP in the last two WCMAC meetings. The goal of this discussion guide is to present the proposed approach and deliverables to support MSP plan development in more detail and to have WCMAC confirm this approach.

Relevant materials from prior WCMAC meetings:

- Marine Spatial Planning Fiscal Year '14-'15 Potential Needs List (October meeting)
- Marine Spatial Planning FY 14-15 Funding - Budget Outlook (January and April meetings)

Background:

Ecology is the designated lead for coordinating the development of the Marine Spatial Plan (RCW 43.372) and associated environmental documents (draft EIS, EIS). This plan will evaluate multiple potential new uses and assess the impacts of various alternatives on existing uses and environmental areas. Initial scoping has identified a long list of topics that will require additional research, synthesis and writing such as: environmental context (including oceanographic conditions and natural resources), climate change, management and planning context, and potential impacts such as electromagnetic radiation, spills, gear conflicts and relevant information from other planning processes.

Drafting environmental documents and plans takes varying amount of staff resources – they can range from tens of thousands of dollars to millions of dollars. Cost drivers include the complexity of topics, geography, and number of comments anticipated.

Developing a plan of this geographic extent and complexity requires background research, synthesis, writing, and analysis that is beyond Ecology's current capacity. Without this capacity, Ecology estimates developing a draft plan and EIS would take at least 18 months longer than the current timeline (fall 2016 instead of spring 2015).

Proposed Approach:

Secure additional technical/policy capacity to support the MSP plan development by hiring temporary planning staff with strong experience to complete the work described below through the remainder of the biennium (~12 months).

Estimated Cost:

\$100,000 (Environmental Planner for 12 months). This is within the prior cost estimates for this work, and is consistent with the total approximated cost for the "needs required by law" as presented at the October WCMAC meeting (estimated at \$1M to 1.2 M).

Proposed Tasks & Deliverables:

Tasks

- Conduct research on topics covered by the Marine Spatial Plan and environmental documents.
- Synthesize and summarize best available science on a variety of topics for the plan and environmental documents, including collaborating with stakeholders, agencies and other experts to gather information.
- Write sections and chapters of the draft plan and environmental documents for further review by policy and planning staff.
- Assist with policy analysis and responses.
- Assist with other planning process tasks, as needed. These may include responding to comments or questions, providing planning updates, writing and editing outreach materials or planning documents, providing administrative support (e.g. coordinating planning team meetings), and managing specific projects (e.g. shipping data, seafloor mapping, visual resource inventory).

Deliverables

- Technical reports, literature reviews, memos, and other documents on variety of topics addressed by the plan and environmental documents.
- Draft chapters of the plan and environmental documents (draft EIS, final EIS).

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends WCMAC confirm that the state should proceed with the proposed approach to support MSP plan development as outlined above.