

Washington Coast Marine Spatial Planning Science Advisory Panel Scoping Process Summary

Scoping Process

Washington Sea Grant in consultation with the State Ocean Caucus and the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council (WCMAC) is convening a Science Advisory Panel to provide independent, nonrepresentational scientific advice to assist in the development of the Washington coast marine spatial plan.

The 2010 Marine Waters Planning and Management Act establishes the goal of sustainably managing increasing demands on marine resources while considering current uses and planning for future needs. The science advisory panel is comprised of scientific experts from federal, state and tribal governments and academic institutions. The Panel will provide feedback on data quality and project methodology to assist planners in the development of the marine spatial plan. The Panel serves as an opportunity to facilitate information exchange and joint knowledge building between policy and science to enrich the decision making process for marine spatial planning.

In order to better understand the expectations and identify specific questions for the science panel, Washington Sea Grant conducted a scoping process. As part of the scoping process, discussions were held with members of the WCMAC to better understand the role of the science panel in Washington's unique science-policy interface for marine spatial planning. Discussions also took place with science panel chairs or staff from Oregon's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, Rhode Island's Science Advisory Task Force and the Puget Sound Partnership Science Committee. This document provides a summary of expectations, specific questions that were described in discussions with WCMAC members as well as lessons learned from other science advisory groups. This report also puts forward a list of priority topics to engage the science panel for the near term.

Role of Science Panel

The WCMAC described the primary role of the science panel as a way to provide neutral facts and bring additional credibility to the planning process. The responsibilities for the Panel described by the WCMAC include vetting and reviewing data, identifying baseline information and answering questions about project methods. The WCMAC also provided some detailed projects and topic areas where they would like the Panel's feedback.

Review Data

WCMAC discussed the need for scientists to help review current data, identify and prioritize data gaps or identify data that needs additional bolstering. Specific data sets that were mentioned that need data review include:

- Seafloor mapping
- Oceanographic data
- Threatened and endangered species
- Bird and mammal data
- Benthic habitat data

Understand Baseline Information

Several WCMAC members talked about the need to better understand the current state of the Washington coast. Repeatedly members described the need for a better understanding of the baseline information of marine resources, ocean acidification and seafood industry economic data.

Review Methods

WCMAC discussed that it is important to involve scientists in the development of project methods for collecting new data. While scientists can be involved in the review of methods and initial results, at this point the state does not anticipate new projects to review the development of methods. Several members also thought it would be helpful to talk with scientists about the best way to express or display certain data sets in the data viewer. Specific questions listed by WCMAC members include:

- What is the best method to represent whale density data?
- What is the best way to understand or represent data for chlorophyll?
- What are the best methods and strategy for additional seafloor mapping projects?
- What is the best method to represent mammal and seabird data?

Project Development and Review

The WCMAC made several suggestions for which projects would benefit from additional scientific review. The three projects that were described include:

- IEA indicator process
- Economic analysis project
- Forage fish study

WCMAC discussed the preference to have the Panel involved in the development of project scopes of work and deliverables. Members also described the desire to have the Panel review draft MSP chapters in their area of expertise.

Lessons Learned from Oregon, Rhode Island and Puget Sound Science Groups

Part of the scoping process included having conversations with science panel chairs and staff from Oregon's Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, Rhode Island's Science Advisory Task Force and the Puget Sound Partnership Science

Committee. In these conversations lessons learned were shared about the charge, formation and coordination process of the science groups.

Charge

The primary charge of all three science groups was to respond to and invite questions of the planning process. All three of the groups evaluated data quality and participated in conversations about the interpretation of data. In some cases the science group would review the work themselves and in other cases they would facilitate review by providing blind reviewers. In some cases the science group was asked to provide a synthesis report of a particular topic. When determining a question for the science group it was recommended that a full discussion with the council take place and be approved by the council.

Formation and Coordination Process

All three science groups had between 8-12 members. Science groups were given the flexibility to call in other people and form working groups around a particular topic. When a question is ready to go out to the science panel it will be sent out to the entire Panel. Depending on the topic of the question, a subset of the Panel will likely be involved in answering the question. When presenting a question or desired task to a science panel member it was recommended that liaisons from each of the policy groups participate in the discussion. All of the science groups found it beneficial to have a full discussion and reach agreement on a request for the science panel.

Recommended Priority Topics to Engage Science Panel

- Economic analysis project
- Project to identify important ecological areas
- Benthic habitat data
- Bird and mammal data representation
- Chlorophyll representation
- IEA indicator development and review

Timeline

March 3rd SOC meeting- Based on results of scoping process, help identify priority tasks for science panel

Mid- March- Identify science experts

Mid- April- First meeting of the Science Advisory Panel (open to the public)

April 23rd- WCMAC meeting, present scoping document and member bios