

WCMAC SEPA Scoping Process - Discussion Guide

Issue:

The goal is for the Council to understand the status of the SEPA Process for the Marine Spatial Plan and next steps in the planning process.

Background:

The Marine Spatial Planning law (RCW 43.372.020) requires an interagency team of state natural resource agencies to coordinate the development of the MSP. Washington is using an existing interagency team, the State Ocean Caucus, for this planning process. Ecology is the designated lead for the development of the MSP. Other State Ocean Caucus agencies include: Washington Department of Natural Resources, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Sea Grant and State Parks.

As lead for the MSP, Ecology is using the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to evaluate the potential significant negative environmental impacts of the MSP prior to decision-making (see RCW 43.21C).

- This SEPA process is a non-project evaluation of the development of a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) for Washington's Pacific Coast.
 - 'Non-project' proposals are those, such as plans, that are not actual on-the-ground construction or modifications to the environment.
 - Proposed on-the-ground projects will go through their own individual SEPA review.
- Ecology formally started the SEPA process with a scoping notice and comment period from July 16, 2013 - September 23, 2013.
 - A scoping document requested input on several topics related to the scope of the MSP and Draft EIS, including draft goals and objectives, potential activities for the plan to address, and the study area boundary.
 - Ecology received 45 comment letters.
- Scoping helps define the scope of the project and issues to be analyzed.

Ecology is publishing a SEPA scoping summary, which summarizes changes to the scope of the MSP and includes the comments and responses to the SEPA scoping process. A summary of scoping provides the opportunity to communicate on the decisions made on what elements and issues the draft EIS will analyze. Ecology made the changes to the scope for all or some of the following reasons: in response to comments Ecology received; to ensure clarity and consistency; and/or to meet the intent of the authorizing statute.

Next Steps:

Ecology will continue to work with the interagency team, tribes, WCMAC and others on gathering data and information to support the development of a Draft EIS and Draft MSP. Ecology's goal is to issue a draft EIS and MSP by Spring 2015 (see draft MSP process timeline).

WCMAC has the opportunity to provide input in the following next steps for the planning process:

- Feedback on a draft "actions" list under MSP goals and objectives (January-April 2014).
- Input on additional information needs for the marine spatial plan (ongoing).
- Additional input on development of planning scenarios in the Draft EIS (April-July 2014).