



Meeting Summary
State Ocean Caucus outreach meeting
Willapa Harbor Community Center
South Bend, WA
Wednesday, May 28, 2008 5:30 pm – 8 pm

Copies of all electronic presentations and handouts mentioned in the summary below will be posted on the State Ocean Caucus website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/ocean/>
Hard copies are also available upon request, contact Jennifer Hennessey by email: jenh461@ecy.wa.gov or by phone: 360-407-6595.

Welcome and Introductions

Jennifer Hennessey, Washington Department of Ecology and coordinator for State Ocean Caucus opened the meeting with welcome and introductions. 34 attendees and participants signed in for this meeting.

Jennifer provided an overview on State Ocean Caucus and activities of the group. The State Ocean Caucus is an interagency team that provides a way for state agencies involved in ocean and coastal resource activities to work together to prioritize activities and solve problems related to the ocean environment. The caucus acts on the recommendations of the Ocean Policy Work Group and fosters continued involvement and participation by local communities, coastal tribes, business and environmental interests, federal agencies, academics, and others in their efforts. Over the past year, the State Ocean Caucus' developed a detailed work plan to act on the Ocean Policy Work Group's recommendations in their final report, "Washington's Ocean Action Plan", established an advisory group, and conducted several outreach meetings in coastal communities. For more materials and information or to join the WA-Ocean email list, visit the State Ocean Caucus' website at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/ocean/>

Updates on State Ocean Caucus activities

Other State Ocean Caucus members provided a few key updates on various activities.

West Coast Governors' Agreement

Kathleen Drew from the Governor's office described Washington's regional partnerships on ocean health issues. The West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health is an agreement among the governors of California, Oregon, and Washington and with support of federal agency partners and others to improve coastal and ocean health. They will release their action plan that outlines specific activities by the states and their partners in the coming weeks.

State Parks planning

Chris Regan with State Parks and Recreation Commission gave an update a long-term planning effort for state parks on the Long Beach Peninsula and the Seashore Conservation area. This includes issues such as managing shore pines and removal of sand for cranberry bogs.



State Parks is seeking input from the communities and park users. For more information on this planning process, see State Parks' website at: <http://www.parks.wa.gov/plans/longbeach/>

Washington Sea Grant activities

The West Coast Sea Grant institutions, including Washington Sea Grant, are developing a West Coast regional research priorities plan. They conducted several workshops in Washington as well as the other states last fall and received over 5,000 comments – 2,000 of which came from Washington. They are currently working to collate, process, and prioritize the input they received. They plan to have a draft research priorities plan out for public comment by the end of summer and a final plan released in the fall of 2008.

This year, Washington Sea Grant in conjunction with the State Ocean Caucus is establishing a graduate marine policy fellowship pilot project. Named after Marc Hershman, a University of Washington professor and director of School of Marine Affairs, whose career was dedicated to marine policy issues, the fellowship will place two fellows for nine months with State Ocean Caucus agencies to work on advancing marine policy activities outlined by the State Ocean Caucus. Examples of potential project topics include: climate change, alternative ocean energy, coastal zone management program review, and marine debris. Washington Sea Grant just completed interviews for the fellowship. The selected candidates will be placed with agencies and projects and start this fall. The pilot project is planned to run for three years.

April Coast Cleanup and Future Cleanups

Shelley Pollock from the Long Beach Grass Roots Garbage Gang (<http://www.ourbeach.org/>) presented on the large problem of garbage at coastal beaches and the work by this organization to conduct beach cleanups in the Long Beach area. They have adopt-a-beach leaders and groups, which lead efforts along the beach. They receive grant funding (including from Ecology's litter fund), memberships, and donations to support their efforts. The Long Beach Grass Roots Garbage Gang is one of many organizations participating in a new coalition called the Washington Clean Coast Alliance that is working to coordinate and expand coastal cleanups on the outer coast through a year-round CoastSavers program.

Jennifer Hennessey reported that the April 26, 2008 Coastal Cleanup organized by the Washington Clean Coast Alliance had over 1100 volunteers and removed 22.84 tons of debris coast-wide. Upcoming beach clean-up events include July 5th and September 20-21st. To find out more about the Washington Clean Coast Alliance and opportunities for volunteering visit the CoastSavers website at: www.coastsavers.org.

Update on forming outer coast Marine Resource Committees

Recent state legislation allowed the formation of citizen groups at the county-level called marine resource committees (MRC) on the outer coast. It also provided some funding for forming these groups on the outer coast. This is built off of a successful model from counties in the northwest straits of Puget Sound. Grays Harbor County Commissioner Al Carter provided some background on the importance of local input and role in managing marine resources from the bottom-up with marine resource committees. He indicated that John Kliem and Debbie Holden



from Creative Community Solutions have been hired by Grays Harbor County to lead the next steps on setting up a marine resource committee for the county.

John Kliem and Debbie Holden provided a presentation on the MRC-formation process for Grays Harbor County. In February, they held an initial workshop to discuss what MRCs are, as well as the purpose, priority issues, and remaining questions regarding marine resource committees. Following up from that work, they will conduct a two-phase process to assist Grays Harbor County. Phase 1 consists of interviews of current MRCs and others in order to answer remaining questions from the February workshop. The outcome of Phase 1 will be a summary report and formation of a citizen-based exploratory committee for the county. Phase 2 will guide the exploratory committee in developing a vision and recommendations for structure and action strategy of the MRC. They have just begun with setting up Phase 1 and will set up a link on the Grays Harbor County website to share progress on their effort.

Question:

- What will the benchmarks be for outer coast MRCs? Will they be different from those of the Northwest Straits MRCs?

Response:

- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will oversee the outer coast MRCs and has just hired a coordinator to assist with this effort. The legislation points to “Washington’s Ocean Action Plan” as the guiding document for outer coast MRCs, so the benchmarks will be developed primarily from that document and will be different than the MRCs in Puget Sound. However, MRCs will have flexibility to develop additional priorities and projects.

Question:

- What happens to fishing gear such as crab pots when they are recovered? Do they get returned to their owners or are they available for purchase/auction?

Response:

- WDFW usually is able to return crab pots to their owners, because they have identification tags on them. For ones that don’t have tags or identifiable floats, WDFW stores them in their facility at Montesano. Fishing nets are usually destroyed or recycled because their owners cannot be located.

Comments from audience:

- Disappointment over NOAA’s denial for WDFW proposed use of funding for derelict gear removal. WDFW had requested \$150,000 for a project on the outer coast. Willing to bring this up with NOAA and others.
- Good to see no pictures of crab pots in the marine debris talk and congratulated the industry of doing a good job tracking and tying down their gear.
- The problem of derelict gear and marine debris is on-going and too big to address comprehensively. Others responded that the on-going effects to the marine environment made it worth addressing.



Willapa Bay water quality monitoring and real-time tools for shellfish growers

Jennifer Hennessey, Washington Dept. of Ecology, presented information on Ecology's on-going marine water quality monitoring efforts in Willapa Bay. Ecology conducts monthly monitoring at several sites in the bay and also maintains two moorings that gather data continuously. Collecting this water quality data establishes and maintains baseline environmental data, helps identify significant changes in water quality, supports management of resources, and provides data to the public.

She also provided information on an online tool that provides access to real-time water quality data. Since water quality is a critical component for shellfish growth, health, and harvest, this project targeted information for shellfish growers to enable them to access meaningful data for managing their product. The current real-time sites are in Hood Canal and Puget Sound. This tool was developed by the National Estuarine Research Reserves for three West Coast states and sought input from shellfish growers. This summer, Ecology plans to update the technology on the mooring in central Willapa Bay in order to allow the real-time transfer of water quality data in Willapa Bay to this online tool. To access the water quality tool online, go to:

<http://www.nanoos-shellfish.org/>

Spartina Management Update

Mary Toohey, Washington Dept. of Agriculture provided an overview of the progress on the eradication of Spartina, a non-native and highly invasive marine plant in Willapa Bay. The collaboration of federal, state, and local partners in treating Spartina has reduced the acreage by 85 percent over the past 5 years. However, the remaining patches are more difficult to treat and will require continued treatment and monitoring. At the current pace of treatment and success, they expect to reach eradication of Spartina by 2010. Mary also shared the draft treatment plan for this summer (2008) and discussed the eventual transition of management to local partners. The 2008 plan outlines an expected treatment of 1,150 acres this year by all the partners combined. Other state agency partners in the audience to answer questions were: Dave Heimer, Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and Wendy Brown, Washington Dept. of Natural Resources.

Question:

- What are the treatment methods and timeframes used for Spartina? Are there any negative impacts to water quality or sediments in the bay?

Response:

- A variety of techniques are used including applying an herbicide and mechanical methods such as mowing. The treatment period is typically during the growing season - June through September. The water quality permit for this work (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System or NPDES permit) has required extensive water quality monitoring in the past, which has not shown much of an effect. The new permit focuses more on monitoring sediment in the bay.



Open Forum and Discussion

During this time, the audience was encouraged to provide feedback on agenda, current activities and issues, and priorities. A participant asked about the plan for the Marine Protected Area bill (Senate Bill 6231), which was signed into law this year. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) provided a summary of the bill and work plan.

The Marine Protected Area bill tasked WDFW to lead a work group to examine marine protected areas in all of Washington's marine waters. By December 1, 2009, WDFW and the work group is specifically tasked with providing: 1) an updated inventory of all marine protected areas and 2) developing recommendations on criteria for establishing additional marine protected areas. The new WDFW coordinator for outer coast MRCs will also work half-time on this project. Rather than set up an entirely new work group, WDFW plans to utilize existing groups including coordinating through the State Ocean Caucus for input as it relates to the outer coast.

Someone asked about the removal of pilings that provide habitat for marine fish such as lingcod and popular dive sites in Puget Sound. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a program to remove these pilings because they leach toxic chemicals (creosote) into the environment and are a source of contamination to the sound. DNR indicated they do extensive analysis and planning for removals and consults site users and the public. This process takes into account plans for restoring for recreation and habitat uses.

Other issues of interest to participants for future meetings included more information on ocean conditions and resources such as ocean acidification, dead zones, coral, water quality, and other patterns. A participant asked for more updates on the monthly State Ocean Caucus meetings. The purpose of these working sessions is to continue progress on specific action items. The State Ocean Caucus group offered to post agendas for these meetings on the website.