



# Improving Coastal and Ocean Resource Management in Washington State

May 2007

Two initiatives are underway that will shape the future of ocean and coastal management in Washington State.

- **West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health**
- **Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) reauthorization**

Washington's input on these initiatives will result in better representation of our state's priorities and concerns. By gathering input from stakeholders and informing these regional and national initiatives, our state can:

- Jointly influence decisions regarding priority issues on our coasts.
- Leverage the resources necessary to achieve action on key initiatives.
- Facilitate greater efficiency and effectiveness.

These regional and national initiatives will provide important support for Washington's new efforts to improve coastal and ocean resource management:

- Puget Sound Partnership
- State Ocean Caucus (formerly the Ocean Policy Work Group)

Recently, the Puget Sound Partnership launched an extensive effort to define priority actions needed to restore Puget Sound to a healthy, vibrant ecosystem by the year 2020. In addition, the State Ocean Caucus will advance the recommendations of the Ocean Policy Work Group to improve coastal and ocean resource management on the state's outer coast.

Together, these complementary, state-level efforts build a foundation for action, but true progress requires collaboration with regional, federal, international, and tribal partners. The West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health and the reauthorization of the CZMA present an opportunity to further Washington's priorities.

# 1. West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health

## Overview

On September 18, 2006, the governors of California, Oregon and Washington announced the “West Coast Governors’ Agreement on Ocean Health”. The West Coast Governors’ Agreement (WCGA) sets forth a new, proactive approach to collaborate regionally on protecting and managing the ocean and coastal resources along the entire West Coast. The agreement ordered the states to develop a set of specific regional recommendations and initiatives in seven priority areas:

1. Ensuring clean coastal waters and beaches.
2. Protecting and restoring healthy ocean and coastal habitats.
3. Promoting the effective implementation of ecosystem-based management of our ocean and coastal resources.
4. Reducing adverse impacts of offshore development.
5. Increasing ocean awareness and literacy among our citizens.
6. Expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring.
7. Fostering sustainable economic development throughout our diverse coastal communities.

## The Opportunity

Under the WCGA the West Coast states, with participation from federal agencies, are developing a regional action plan. Staff from California, Oregon, and Washington have written a discussion paper that suggests potential action items in each of the seven priority areas identified by the governors. The purpose of the discussion paper is to solicit public input in order to develop specific regional recommendations and initiatives that will form the West Coast’s regional action plan.

## The Connection to Washington’s Efforts

The priorities and potential action items in the WCGA discussion paper closely mirror the recommendations and priorities developed by the Puget Sound Partnership and Ocean Policy Work Group. Many issues identified by Washington’s efforts are common to all three West Coast states and require substantial investment of resources. The West Coast regional action plan that results from this effort could advance Washington’s priorities by providing the means to act on the recommendations of the Ocean Policy Work Group and Puget Sound Partnership.

## Some Ideas So Far...

**Regional Sediment Management** – Dredged sediment is currently managed on a project-by-project basis. Clean sand that could be used to combat erosion is often wasted through disposal into deeper waters. To solve this problem, the Washington Ocean Policy Work Group has recommended pursuing regional sediment management planning for the Columbia River, but this effort requires partnering with the State of Oregon as well as other entities. In addition, California is beginning to develop regional sediment management plans.

**Coastal Pollution** – Coastal waters are vulnerable to pollution from stormwater runoff in coastal watersheds that carries excess fertilizers, bacteria and viruses, oils and chemicals from paved surfaces and from other human activities. Nonpoint source pollution is thought to be the number one source

of coastal water pollution in the United States. Washington's Puget Sound Partnership has estimated that implementing nonpoint pollution reduction strategies and actions in the Puget Sound region would cost at least \$3 billion over the next 13 years (*Sound Health, Sound Future: Protecting and Restoring Puget Sound*, December 2006).

**Seafloor/Benthic Habitat Mapping** – Benthic habitat mapping will aid fisheries managers in understanding the types and locations of key habitats. It will also assist resource managers who must make decisions on project siting or authorizing activities such as alternative energy developments or dredge disposal. Finally, benthic habitat mapping will help coastal managers understand and predict coastal hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and erosion.

### **How You Can Help**

The WCGA is seeking your comments and suggestions on the regional actions and priorities outlined in their discussion paper. Workshops to solicit public input will be held in all three states during the spring and summer of 2007. The public is invited to participate and provide comments at the upcoming workshops or to submit comments electronically to the WCGA. We look forward to hearing your comments on the discussion paper. **Comments are due by August 1, 2007.**

**To submit comments electronically or download West Coast Governors' Agreement materials, including the discussion paper, go to:**

[www.westcoastoceans.gov](http://www.westcoastoceans.gov)

**For more information, contact:**

Jennifer Hennessey, [jenh461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:jenh461@ecy.wa.gov) or 360-407-6595.

## **2. Coastal Zone Management Act reauthorization**

### **Overview**

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972 created a unique partnership between federal and state governments with the goal of balancing conservation of coastal environments with responsible development of economic and cultural resources. As a voluntary partnership between the federal government and U.S. coastal states and territories, the CZMA leverages federal and state matching funds and gives states the flexibility to design coastal management programs that accommodate their unique situations. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management administers the act at the federal level.

In Washington State, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) currently implements the CZMA through several laws, including primarily the Shoreline Management Act (SMA). The public adopted the SMA in a 1972 referendum with the intent of preventing the "inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines." Local governments and Ecology administer the SMA cooperatively. Cities and counties across Washington State develop Shoreline Master Programs that regulate development along marine waters and larger lakes and streams. Ecology provides technical assistance and reviews local programs and permit decisions.

### **The Opportunity**

The pending reauthorization of the CZMA by Congress has prompted discussions within the coastal community on ways to improve coastal management in the U.S. In response, NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, which administers programs created by the CZMA, and the Coastal States Organization (CSO) are undertaking a project to engage coastal managers and stakeholders in envisioning the future of coastal management. The goal of this visioning process is to gather feedback on priority issues and collect innovative ideas for improving the CZMA.

NOAA and CSO are holding workshops for both stakeholders and coastal management experts to generate innovative techniques and solutions, explore their feasibility, and assess their potential impacts and degree of support among constituents. The 2007 West Coast regional meeting will be held in San Francisco on June 12<sup>th</sup>.

NOAA and CSO will develop a synthesis of information gathered through the visioning process by the fall of 2007. The final outcome will be a set of core principles, a suite of options for revising the CZMA, and suggestions for other techniques that NOAA and the states may consider implementing to improve coastal management.

Reauthorization is an opportunity to incorporate new tools or funding into CZMA administration. This visioning process is a chance for Washington State to provide input into the development of a new CZMA that will assist us in achieving our goals for Puget Sound and the Pacific coast.

### **The Connection to Washington's Efforts**

Washington's participation in the CZMA provides funding and tools to address issues facing Puget Sound, our Pacific Coast, and the broader West Coast region. Funding provided through the CZMA allows Ecology to carry out the requirements of the SMA. Ecology uses CZMA funds to directly assist local governments in developing Shoreline Master Programs, to pay staff to provide scientific

and policy technical assistance, to train coastal managers in relevant issues, and to support a variety of other activities targeted at achieving sustainable development on Washington's coasts.

In addition, the CZMA contains a "federal consistency" provision, an important tool that allows Washington to influence federal actions likely to affect Washington's coastal resources or uses. The consistency requirement is an important mechanism to address coastal effects, to ensure federal consideration of state management programs, and to avoid conflicts between states and federal agencies by fostering early consultation and coordination.

### **Some Ideas So Far...**

NOAA and CSO have developed an initial discussion paper that identifies current coastal management issues, constraints, and opportunities. State coastal program managers, estuarine reserve managers, and other state officials have reviewed this paper and provided their perspectives on current and emerging priorities and recommendations to improve coastal management. The managers have identified growth and associated land use changes, habitat degradation, and decreasing water quality as the highest priority threats to the coastal resources of their states. They expect the effects of climate change to emerge as a major resource pressure in the future.

Coastal managers have suggested a number of ways to improve federal-state partnerships, cultivate champions for coastal management, develop an ecosystem-based strategy for land acquisition, and enable partnerships with local governments.

### **How You Can Help**

Washington State would like to gather feedback from stakeholders in our state to complement this visioning initiative. Because we intend to reach out to stakeholders at previously scheduled meetings, participants from throughout Washington's coastal zone can provide input into the process without traveling to the regional meeting. We intend to reach out to a broad array of stakeholders who have an interest in Washington's Coastal Zone Management Program. All feedback gathered in Washington will be passed on to NOAA and CSO, and will be inform their documentation and their final product.

For those unable to participate in any of the stakeholder meetings in Washington State, NOAA has an online mechanism for gathering feedback **Comments are due by July 13, 2007.**

**To submit comments electronically and view additional information about the Envisioning project, go to:**

[http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/czm/czma\\_vision.html](http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/czm/czma_vision.html)

Washington State would like to gather feedback from stakeholders in our state to complement this visioning initiative. We encourage interested stakeholders to forward a copy of comments provided to NOAA to Brian Lynn, Department of Ecology, Coastal/Shorelands Section Manager, at 360.407.6224 or [blyn461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:blyn461@ecy.wa.gov). Having an opportunity to review comments from stakeholders in our area will allow Washington's coastal program to make better informed suggestions that reflect the desires of residents of the state.

**For more information on Washington's Coastal Program, contact:**

Carrie Byron, [cbyr461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:cbyr461@ecy.wa.gov) or 360-407-7509 or  
Brian Lynn, [blyn461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:blyn461@ecy.wa.gov) or 360-407-6224