

Chapter 6

Public Participation

All phases Shoreline Master Program Planning Process

Introduction

Public participation is essential when developing a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) that will be accepted by the local community and Ecology. Both the Shoreline Management Act (SMA) and the SMP procedural rules and Guidelines require public participation to ensure all interested parties have an opportunity to shape shoreline policies and regulations. Public participation at the local level should occur during Phases 1 through 5 of the SMP update process.

Major elements

The major elements of public participation for SMP updates include:

- Preparing a public participation plan and using it to guide the process. Community visioning, Task 3.1 of the SMP planning process, should be included in the plan. See [Chapter 10, Community Visioning](#).
- Obtaining and sustaining public participation through a variety of outreach activities.
- Maintaining good records of public participation activities.

Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the legal basis for public participation during the SMP planning process and lists the components of a public participation plan. It provides examples of stakeholders and their roles, including citizens and technical advisory committees. The chapter discusses ways to reach and keep the public engaged in the SMP process, provides tips for choosing and organizing the right type of event, discusses how to keep the process on track, and reviews ways to manage public input. Attachments include a [checklist](#) of public participation meeting tasks and supplies and an example of a [participation agreement](#) for committee members.

Additional information on public participation is available from numerous sources. The [Resources](#) page has links to websites with additional information on public participation.

Legal basis for public participation

Public participation for SMPs is required by the SMA, the SMP Procedural rules, and the SMP Guidelines. Local governments and Ecology can face legal challenges on SMP approvals if public participation does not meet these legal requirements. These requirements apply to new SMPs, comprehensive updates of SMPs, and limited SMP amendments.

The RCW and WAC requirements are minimum requirements. Local efforts vary widely. Many jurisdictions far exceed the minimum requirements to ensure that citizens are adequately informed about, and have opportunities to participate in, the comprehensive SMP update process.

Shoreline Management Act

The SMA intent is to insure that those interested in SMPs have “full opportunity for involvement.” The SMA states the local government and Ecology “shall not only invite but actively encourage participation by all persons and private groups and entities showing an interest in shoreline management programs” [[RCW 90.58.130](#)].

The SMA also requires local governments to invite participation from federal, state and local government agencies, including municipal and public corporations that have interests or responsibilities relating to shorelines.

Shoreline Master Program procedural rules

The SMP procedural rules require local governments to “make all reasonable efforts to inform, fully involve and encourage participation” of interested persons, private entities and local, state and federal agencies” [[WAC 173-26-090](#)]. Local governments planning under the Growth Management Act also must develop and disseminate a public participation program for comprehensive plan amendments and development regulations related to shorelines. Public participation shall be “early and continuous” and include “dissemination of informative materials, proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, and consideration of and response to public comments.”

[WAC 173-26-100](#) requires local governments to solicit public and agency comment during the drafting of new or amended SMPs. The degree of involvement “should be gauged according to the level of complexity, anticipated controversy, and range of issues covered in the draft proposal.” Local governments must conduct at least one public hearing on the draft proposal.

RCW 90.58.130: To insure that all persons and entities having an interest in the guidelines and master programs developed under this chapter are provided with a full opportunity for involvement in both their development and implementation, the department and local governments shall:

(1) Make reasonable efforts to inform the people of the state about the shoreline management program of this chapter and in the performance of the responsibilities provided in this chapter, shall not only invite but actively encourage participation by all persons and private groups and entities showing an interest in shoreline management programs of this chapter; and

(2) Invite and encourage participation by all agencies of federal, state, and local government, including municipal and public corporations, having interests or responsibilities relating to the shorelines of the state. State and local agencies are directed to participate fully to insure that their interests are fully considered by the department and local governments.

As part of the SMP submittal requirements, local governments must provide copies of all comments received and names and addresses of interested parties involved in the SMP process [[WAC 173-26-110\(7\)](#)]. All e-mail addresses must be included with the interested parties' mailing list.

Shoreline Master Program Guidelines

The SMP Guidelines repeat these mandates and specifically require communication with state agencies and affected Indian tribes [[WAC 173-26-201\(3\)\(b\)](#)]. “Before undertaking substantial work, local governments shall notify applicable state agencies to identify state interests, relevant regional and statewide efforts, available information, and methods for coordination and input.” The Guidelines also require local governments to be “prepared to describe and document their methods to ensure that all interested parties have a meaningful opportunity to participate.”

The SMP Guidelines require local governments to notify affected tribes about their SMP updates. Indian tribes are interested in shoreline issues, especially as it relates to their livelihoods and treaty rights. Tribal information is available at the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs website at <http://www.goia.wa.gov/>.

The SMP Guidelines also require local governments to “be prepared to describe and document their methods to ensure that all interested parties have a meaningful opportunity to participate” [[WAC 173-26-201\(3\)\(b\)\(i\)](#)].

Public participation plan

The public participation plan lays out how local governments will gain broad participation throughout the SMP process. Local governments that have SMP grant agreements with Ecology must submit a public participation plan (Task 1.2 of the SMP Planning Process). Public participation updates are also required as part of the quarterly progress reports. Ecology encourages public participation plans for all local governments preparing SMP comprehensive updates and limited amendments.

Framework for participation

The initial plan will be a framework for public participation activities throughout the SMP update process. The plan is likely to change as the SMP process evolves and you learn more about community needs for participation. Be sure and keep track of the changes and inform your Ecology grant officer. Significant changes may require approval by the grant officer.

Asking the public directly how they want to be communicated with and involved is a simple way to increase the success of a public participation process. Workshops, surveys and stakeholder interviews are common techniques to gather early input on a public participation plan. Although this takes more work upfront, having the public co-design the plan ensures more buy-in to the process and outcome. It also can provide an opportunity for disparate stakeholders to identify the common values, messages and materials that resonate across a wide range of stakeholders.

Components of plan

The public participation plan should:

- Describe the SMP amendment process.
- Provide descriptions and timelines for public participation activities and dates or milestone targets for SMP products.
- Identify key stakeholders. (See the “Stakeholders” section, below.) Indicate key outreach techniques for each stakeholder group, emphasizing approaches designed to seek and acquire input from the full range of community interests.
- Identify opportunities for the public to provide input, obtain information, review draft documents, receive notice of public participation activities, file appeals, and other SMP tasks.
- Clearly articulate the role of the public, citizen advisory committees, Planning Commission and elected officials. This should include expectations of time commitments, responsibilities and activities. Also, address whether participants are in an advisory or decision making capacity. For jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act, be consistent with public participation plans developed and maintained for local comprehensive plans and development regulations, as they relate to shorelines of the state. See [RCW 36.70A.130](#) and [WAC 173-26-090](#).

Your public participation plan will depend on the size of your jurisdiction, the complexity of shoreline issues, the diversity of your stakeholders and other factors. A small city may need different techniques than a large county divided by mountains or water bodies.

Stakeholders

Local governments should seek out all shoreline users and stakeholders and encourage their participation. An adequate public participation process ensures that everyone is well-informed and provided convenient and meaningful ways to participate.

Identifying stakeholders

Stakeholders are those parties who have an interest in the outcome of the SMP process. They range from the occasional beach walker or visitor to the container-shipping industry to regulatory agencies, as well as residents and local officials. SMP policies and regulations may affect all of them, so they have a “stake” in the development of the SMP. The list below provides examples of stakeholders and likely does not include all shoreline stakeholders.

Shoreline property owners

Home and residential property owners
Homeowners associations
Business and industry owners
Port districts
Railroads

Public property owners (park districts, municipalities, state agencies)
Public and private utilities, water districts

Individual shoreline users

Shoreline area residents
Shoreline users – those who fish, swim, paddle, boat and walk
Residents generally interested in local planning
Non-English speaking populations
Tourists and visitors

Shoreline user groups

Boating and paddling organizations
Swimming clubs
Fishing groups
Beach watcher organizations
Research, academic and educational institutions

Local and regional organizations

Business groups such as the Chamber of Commerce
Environmental organizations
Restoration and enhancement organizations
Land use organizations
Property rights organizations
Ethnic organizations
Neighborhood associations
Real estate associations
Tourism agencies

State agencies

Department of Ecology
Department of Fish and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources
Department of Commerce
Puget Sound Partnership
Department of Health

Tribes

Tribes with local or nearby reservations
Tribes with local hunting and fishing rights
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Federal agencies

Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
Army Corps of Engineers
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Local officials

Neighborhood planning advisory groups
 Planning Commission
 SMP advisory groups
 Elected officials

Others

Neighboring jurisdictions
 Shoreline contractors (bulkheads and homes, for example)

Roles of stakeholders

Stakeholders have various roles and levels of authority during the SMP planning process. For example, individuals not affiliated with particular organizations may attend meetings and provide oral or written comments. Shoreline recreational user groups, port districts, homeowners groups and other organizations may develop position papers that they present to the planning commission and council. State and federal agencies may provide technical expertise and information about laws and regulations. The Washington Department of Ecology will provide technical expertise and formal comments during its review and approval of the SMP.

Appointed advisory committees such as technical or citizen advisory committee will generally be more involved than many other stakeholders. Technical committee members typically will suggest and review scientific studies and other data about the local shoreline, analyze the inventory and characterization information, and provide science-based recommendations about shoreline issues. The citizens committee typically looks at the public participation plan, shoreline policy issues, reviews the inventory and characterization, and recommends goals, policies and regulations. The citizens committee also may help organize and conduct public participation events.

Appointed and elected officials such as planning commission members and county or city council members also are stakeholders. A planning commission usually reviews all available information and recommendations from advisory committees, hears public comment at workshops and public hearings, and makes a recommendation to the council. The council considers available info and the planning commission recommendation, then decides whether to adopt that recommendation or make changes to it. The council's decision is sent to Ecology for review and approval.

These roles should be clearly explained in the public participation plan and discussed at public participation activities and meetings with the advisory committees, planning commission and council. This helps to establish clear expectations and avoid frustration on the part of committee members and backtracking on decisions previously made.

The table below shows examples of stakeholders and their roles during public participation, with an increasing level of responsibility for making decisions from left to right.

Public Participation Spectrum



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Examples of stakeholders	General public	All interested parties	Citizen advisory committee, technical advisory committee, affected parties	Planning commission, citizen advisory committee, technical advisory committee	Local elected officials and Dept. of Ecology
Your public participation goal	To provide information to increase the public's understanding and encourage their participation.	To obtain feedback on analyses, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with these stakeholders throughout the process, and to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with these stakeholders in every aspect of the decision.	To provide information necessary for making the final decision.

Adapted from "Spectrum of Public Participation" by International Association for Public Participation, 2007.

Example – roles of stakeholders

The City of Bainbridge Island public participation plan provides clear descriptions of the roles of stakeholders, city staff, Environmental Technical Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, City Council and Department of Ecology. For example, the plan states:

Stakeholder Role and Authority: Informal advisory role, to provide input to staff and decision-makers. Citizen stakeholders may also exercise their authority indirectly by voting for elected decision-makers. (Page 7.)

ETAC Role and Authority: Advisory role limited to the selection, peer review and use of scientific information. Specifically, ETAC provides technical and scientific advice to the City on environmental management issues and guidance on how science is applied related to the SMP Update. (Page 8.)

City Council Role and Authority: As established in state law, to review draft SMP Update, gather public input, make changes as desired, and locally adopt the final SMP. The City Council is the legislative authority with the final local decision making authority for the local adoption of the SMP. (Page 8.)

Department of Ecology (DOE) Role and Authority: As established in state law, the DOE provides assistance and guidance to local governments in preparing the SMP. The DOE issues the SMP Guidelines, and provides technical guidance, financial assistance and written comments on draft SMP components. DOE must review and approve all local SMPs. In addition, DOE approves certain shoreline permit decisions, i.e. conditional uses and variances. (Page 9.)

Citizens Advisory Committees

Many local governments form a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), although this is not required by the SMP Guidelines. This forum discusses shoreline management policy issues, sets goals, reviews technical work, proposes regulations, and promotes communication with the public on shoreline management issues. In some jurisdictions, planning commissions carry out these tasks. Some jurisdictions also form separate technical advisory committees that complement the work of the CAC (see discussion of TACs at the end of this section).

When deciding whether to form a CAC, consider the planning commission's workload. The lengthy and time-consuming SMP update process may overwhelm already-busy planning commissioners. Also, planning commission membership may not ensure adequate representation of all shoreline stakeholders. Appointing a CAC often works better. However, staff workload should also be considered, as managing a CAC takes considerable time and effort.

Selecting committee members

Committee members should represent a cross-section of interest groups and public values. All committee members should be able to work cooperatively and respectfully. Search for members who are committed to participating on the committee, not just those who are available. The committee should have no more than about a dozen members unless there are compelling reasons to include additional members. Larger groups can be unwieldy and prevent efficient work. The committee chair should remain neutral and not represent a particular group or interest. When there is a conflict, it should be the chair's primary task to direct the process and arrive at a conclusion – which might be consensus, majority position, or agreement that the perspectives have been accurately captured and it is time to move to the next topic.

Consider having a city council or county commission member attend CAC meetings to help avoid having the CACs recommendations challenged by the planning commission or elected officials later in the process. Appointing a member of the planning commission or the comprehensive-plan citizen committee can help link SMA and GMA planning and ensure consistency between the SMP and the comprehensive plan. Similarly, a port district representative on the committee can help identify potential use conflicts and avoid future inconsistencies between the SMP and the port's master plan.

Establishing the committee's role, rules and procedures

Use the first CAC meeting to introduce committee and staff members; outline the purpose, process and responsibilities of the committee; review issues needing attention; and establish ground rules and procedures. Generally, the committee will advise the planning commission, council or other decision-making body. Clarify the committee's tasks. Will the CAC members help prepare the SMP provisions? Will they review and approve or reject staff's language? Will they be given a choice among alternatives, or be able to suggest alternatives? When will their job be done?

The City of Bainbridge Island has developed a participation agreement for members of its citizen work groups. The agreement explains the group roles, composition and responsibilities, rules of conduct for participants, and structure of meetings. All members and alternate members of the work groups signed the agreement. The signature section notes that “egregious violation” of the agreement rules will result in removal from the work groups. The agreement is [Attachment 1](#) to this chapter.

Successful committees establish and maintain reasonable expectations among committee members from the onset. Clearly describing the committee's authority, responsibilities and work procedures is an important step towards getting the committee off to a good start. Explaining their role as an advisory body avoids a future expectation that the decision-makers will concur with all the CAC's recommendations.

Additional important steps include:

1. Set a standard meeting time and place for committee meetings so all members can adjust their schedules. Meetings should begin and end on time. Long meetings that end well after the agreed-upon time quickly result in committee member burn-out.
2. Discuss the schedule, and explain that the process may take much longer. Turnover can be expected, so discuss how replacements will be selected.
3. Establish how the committee's decisions will be made and how differing views will be represented and conflicts resolved. Voting? Majority/minority reports? Clarify whether consensus is required.
4. Establish a protocol for recording committee recommendations, and communicating draft recommendations prior to meetings. It generally works best if the committee chair presents written options instead of simply asking for committee input. This provides a starting point and focuses discussion. To avoid getting bogged down with details, the options should begin as concepts and move towards greater detail as consensus is approached. A process for exchanging e-mails on changes to draft language should also be identified to avoid lengthy “word-smithing” discussions at meetings.
5. Record minutes at the meetings. Records of each meeting will provide an invaluable method for verifying committee decisions throughout the SMP amendment process.

6. Decide what will happen to the committee after the SMP is adopted. Unless there are specific tasks for the committee after adoption, the CAC should be officially disbanded.
7. Decide how other citizens may participate in committee meetings. Allowing all citizens to observe meetings is important, but opening the discussion to the general public throughout the meeting can be distracting and prevent progress. It may be best to limit public comments and discussion to specific times during the meeting.

Beginning the committee's work

A tour of the shoreline, especially a boat tour, is an ideal way to help committee members become familiar with the waterfront. Alternatively, walking the shoreline will help orient members.

Guest experts such as port officials, Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Ecology staff, maritime economists, special interest groups, and others can address the committee to provide background information. Ecology staff can introduce committee members and other interested parties to the SMP amendment process and emergent shoreline issues and concerns. This introductory training will help to identify many issues the committee will address throughout the SMP process.

Facilitating committee decision-making

Each difficult issue must be tackled in a way that looks for a solution satisfactory to all interests. Such a solution is not necessarily a compromise, but rather a response to a complex problem. One useful approach is to appoint a sub-committee to help resolve conflicts that arise. This avoids distracting the entire committee's attention from other issues and allows a smaller group to tackle solutions to the identified problems.

Ideally, a committee should act as a team that considers all objectives in resolving problems. The win-win negotiating technique described by Roger Fisher and William Ury in the book, *Getting to Yes*, provides a good model for solving potentially difficult conflicts. The approach features the following four elements in arriving at a fair solution to a conflict.

- **Separate people from the problem.** Emotions often get in the way of solving conflicts. Fisher and Ury suggest several methods for dealing with emotions, including acknowledging both sides' perceptions and prejudices, not responding to emotional outbursts, and using effective communication methods. The key is to build personal working relationships so all participants can work together to solve a problem, rather than creating a conflict in which each side tries to win. Informal meetings, such as a shoreline tour, help form and strengthen working relationships.
- **Focus on interests rather than positions** (describe what each party wants, not what they demand). An interest is a desire, a motivation or a concern. A position is a statement or demand. "I want to make sure that the safe, efficient operation of industrial activities is

not diminished by public access improvements" is an interest. "I don't want any public access in the industrial waterfront" is a position. Focusing on interests rather than positions allows both sides to explore areas where they are compatible and to tackle the problem rather than each other's positions.

- **Explore options for mutual gain.** Searching for creative solutions is preferable to simply trying to compromise. Staff members can assist in this effort by proposing solutions that optimize all interests. For example, in a conflict between industrial operators and public access advocates, all parties interests might be promoted by:
 1. Developing plans for public access features that do not impede industrial activities.
 2. Including an SMP provision that describes how to decide when public access is inappropriate.
 3. Or, explicitly describing where public access is not required and allowing off-site public access mitigation according to a specified plan.
- **Use objective criteria to make a decision.** Resolving the issue ultimately means arriving at a decision that may not please everyone. Before taking a potentially divisive vote, the committee should evaluate all options with respect to objective criteria. In this case, the criteria might be the General Policies section of the draft SMP. The preferred solution must conform to the SMA and the Guidelines, and if applicable, the priorities set for shorelines of statewide significance.

Getting to Yes develops these principles in detail and presents many useful techniques for their implementation. Ideally, all major issues are resolved to the maximum extent possible at the local level. Unresolved or contentious issues will likely re-surface at the state review and approval level as well, leading to delays in final SMP approval.

Nurturing the Citizen Advisory Committee

Committee members devote many hours to SMP-related work, providing an invaluable and difficult public service. Their reward is in knowing they are making an important contribution. Keeping the committee on track by meeting its objectives, verifying its role and occasionally reviewing its performance will enhance this feeling. Public recognition of their ongoing contributions is also important. In addition, each committee member deserves his or her viewpoint to be respectfully considered by the other members and the staff. Discourteous behavior should not be tolerated.

Organizing a Technical Advisory Committee

Most jurisdictions updating their SMPs also have a technical/science committee (Technical Advisory Committee or TAC). The TAC is usually comprised of state resource agency, municipal and tribal representatives with data and scientific expertise in shoreline resource issues, as well as citizens with similar training and expertise. Its main focus is on technical issues such as biological, geological and hydraulic processes, wetlands and engineering.

Local governments usually create the TAC when accumulating draft inventory data and developing draft reach maps. The committee often plays an important role in identifying or providing input on data sources. The suggestions for convening and effectively managing a CAC, above, apply equally to the TAC.

Example

Whatcom County posted the following description of its Technical Advisory Committee on its SMP update process website:

“The purpose of the SMP/CAO Technical Advisory Committee is to help focus technical discussions and identify key technical and policy issues associated with natural resources management in Whatcom County and take advantage of and contribute to the existing knowledge base in the county. The following governments and agencies have been invited to participate on the Technical Advisory Committee:

- City of Bellingham*
- Lummi Nation*
- Nooksack Tribe*
- Small Cities Caucus*
- Port of Bellingham*
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife*
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources*
- Washington State Department of Ecology*
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*
- Whatcom Conservation District/NRCS*

In addition to regular participating governments and agencies, representatives from special districts within Whatcom County, such as the Watershed Improvement District and Shellfish Protection Districts will be invited for focused discussions related to their specific areas of interest or expertise. Additionally, specific members from other parallel planning processes in the county, such as WRIA Watershed Management Planning, Salmon Recovery, Lake Whatcom Management and MRC will be invited to participate in the discussions with the advisory committee as appropriate.

Technical Advisory Committee meetings will be open to the public and the meeting dates and locations are posted on the events calendar on this website as they are scheduled.”

The CAC and the TAC can be the backbone of your SMP update process. The success of the process will depend in large part on the members’ ability to listen, learn, share, and constructively debate issues that do not have easy answers. Taking the time to explain historic issues, educate committee members on shoreline management processes and challenges and provide input from shoreline experts will help ensure productive committee output.

Engaging the public

People vary in their preferences for participation. For example, some individuals may want to engage in one-on-one dialogue at an open house, but won't provide public testimony during a hearing. Others will check websites and provide only written comments, while some are comfortable testifying at formal hearings. Providing multiple routes for public participation can help avoid having the most vocal individuals and groups dominate the process. It also ensures that a wide cross-section of your community is represented by the recommendations provided to elected officials.

To build integrity and trust with the public and increase attendance at subsequent events, be clear about why they should come to an event and how their input will be used, and follow through on what you promise.

Diversity of participants

Most jurisdictions have time-honored methods of soliciting public participation. Open houses, workshops, and public meetings are usually relied on for informing the public and getting input, and are promoted in print and online advertisements and through mailings to shoreline property owners and other interested parties. These methods work well for individuals and groups sophisticated about advancing their interests through SMA processes.

However, many stakeholders, for social, cultural or practical reasons, find it difficult to squeeze meetings into their schedule or are not accustomed to participating in planning processes. Examples include busy working parents, swing shift workers, non-English speakers, and shoreline users who live outside the immediate community.

Consider the time of day that's best to engage your community. Evening meetings from 7 to 9 PM are difficult for many to attend – this is dinner time or homework time. Vary the times of your participation events. Some local governments have had success with events scheduled from about 3 PM to 8 PM. This time period can capture people on their way to or from work or after work. Schedule some for Saturday mornings. Think about avoiding conflicts with other events – holidays, parades, races, summer vacation, and election day, for example.

Shoreline users who fish and gather shellfish may be recent immigrants with limited command of the English language. Many of these users do not typically participate in planning projects. Providing translated materials and interpreters is essential to getting meaningful comments. Posting signs at common gathering places (e.g. boat launches, parks, ethnic grocery stores) or putting articles in native language publications can reach these shoreline users. Working with ethnic community leaders to identify methods and tools that work for recent immigrants is vital to being successful.

Be sure to include all generations in the SMP process. Seniors have a lot to offer about historic use of shorelines, and children can help frame a community vision. Find teachers interested in community affairs and invite them to get their students involved. Having children at public meetings can help set a civil tone and encourage participants to find common ground. Making

the world a better place for future generations is often a commonly held value among various stakeholders.

Techniques to connect with the public

Look for new and diverse ways to reach interested parties. There are many ways to connect with the public throughout the SMP update process:

- **Sponsor expert-led field trips.** Field trips are one of the best ways to illustrate the challenges of shoreline planning and bring disparate stakeholders together. Field trips provide an opportunity to view real-life problems that need solutions, build camaraderie among committee members, and see issues from a new perspective.
- **Conduct a mail, online, or telephone survey early in the process to determine public opinion on shoreline management issues.** A survey can provide a gauge of the public values useful in formulating goals and evaluating possible regulations. Ecology conducted two statistically valid statewide public opinion surveys on shoreline management in 1983 and 1996. Survey questions asked people's opinions about their use of the shoreline, popular shoreline activities, attractive and unattractive shoreline qualities, shoreline management and other topics. For information about these surveys, see Ecology's summary publication: [Public Opinion on Shoreline Management in Washington State](#) (November 2004, Ecology publication 04-06-028).
- **Advertise the SMP planning process and specific meetings and activities on local radio and public television stations and in community event columns of local newspapers,** both print and online editions. Some jurisdictions also distribute flyers via newspapers or monthly utility bills. To engage special interest users, place ads or notices in organization or association publications.
- **Post meeting notices at popular gathering places around the community, and on reader boards.** Every community has an array of familiar "posting" places that the public is attuned to checking from time to time: grocery store bulletin boards, libraries, post offices, commercial reader boards, etc. Also, post notices at outdoor retailers, park kiosks, marinas, ethnic grocery stores, and other places particular to your community's shoreline and stakeholders.
- **Send notices to websites of shoreline user groups and community organizations.** Ask them to pass it along to their list of interested parties.
- **Participate in community events such as neighborhood festivals, fairs and farmers markets.** Set up information tables or booths at the mall or the high school's football game. You can distribute information, conduct surveys and talk with people about the SMP update. Provide comment forms for instant feedback.

- **Make presentations to key stakeholder groups, community organizations, and neighborhood associations.** This enables you to customize your message, answer questions specific to the group, address their concerns, and get their input.
- **Use your local government’s website and social media (blog, Facebook, Twitter) to provide information on the planning process and invite public comment on draft products.** Sponsor a ‘favorite shoreline’ or slogan contest. Videotape presentations and put them on the website. The website provides a place to articulate planning goals, post public meeting notices and committee notes, display draft maps and other material, as well as take comment throughout the planning process. However, its utility in informing the public will be only as good as the information it contains and if the public knows it exists. The website should be kept updated and easy to navigate. Set up links to the Ecology website where people can find information about the SMA, SMP Guidelines, and frequently asked questions about SMPs. See [Ecology’s SMP home page](#).

Meeting format

Many public participation processes involve the public coming to a scheduled meeting at a set location. These may include an open house, workshop, charette, visioning process, or public hearing. Some meetings are combinations – for example, an open house followed by a public hearing.

To choose the right type of meeting, start with clearly identifying the intended audience and the specific objectives to be accomplished. Do you want to just provide information? Get input on a decision? Build positive relationships among stakeholders? Going back to early stakeholder interviews or surveys can help you select the right type of meeting for the stakeholders involved.

Early in the process, an open house may be helpful to introduce people to the SMA and SMP update process and find out what they value about local shorelines. Later on, when people have a sense of shoreline issues, a workshop with small group discussions may be appropriate. The [community visioning](#) process required by Task 3.1 should take place after the inventory and characterization report is prepared, so that participants have a good idea of local shoreline conditions and opportunities for preservation, restoration, public access and shoreline uses.

Information about additional techniques can be found through the resources listed in the [Resources](#) section at the end of this chapter. Two examples of meeting formats are discussed below.

Open house format

An informal “drop-in” open house that individuals may attend at any time has proven effective for a planning process and has been used for SMP updates. These typically run two to four hours. Staff and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members are available to explain the process and discuss issues informally. Maps and displays help describe key concepts, jurisdictional boundaries, inventory and characterization results, etc. A survey form with space for general comments assists participants in expressing their concerns and values. These forms provide an

index of participant comments, provide feedback on the event, and solicit ideas for how to improve public participation. The advantage of the drop-in format is that it allows individual exchange of information in a relaxed setting.

Workshop

Workshops typically include a presentation to the audience, followed by small group discussion or exercises. Small group discussions and exercises are most effective when structured with work sheets, instructions and discussion questions, and a neutral facilitator. The presentation and group exercise promotes the exchange of viewpoints and helps participants to recognize the wide range of issues and trade-offs involved with shoreline management.

Organizing the event

To organize an effective public meeting, you need to answer a lot of questions. Who is your audience? What time and place will be best for them? How will you advertise it? What supplies and equipment do you need?

Ecology developed a Public Participation Event Checklist to help you figure out what you need to get ready. Refer to the checklist ([Attachment 2](#)) for lists of tasks, needed materials and supplies, dates to keep in mind and other considerations.

Keeping the process on track

The SMP update timeline sometimes gets derailed when public participation is not well planned and conducted. For example, erroneous information that is circulated around the community takes up staff time to respond, reducing time spent on learning what the public thinks about the draft SMP. Or, participants focus on an outcome that is illegal under existing State law.

To help keep the process on track, get public input on the public participation plan to make sure it meets their needs. Clarify the public's role from the outset. Acknowledge early on situations where the community has limited power in decision making due to mandates of the SMA, SMP Guidelines, other regulations and facts that are at the core of the process.

At every meeting, remind people of what public participation activities have occurred, what's resulted from those, and what's coming up. Always display your list of public participation goals.

Dealing with "non-starter" issues

Failure to set the record straight on misinformation and rumors waste's everyone's time and can derail an SMP planning timeline. The local government should clearly provide the rationale for its position, such as State requirements. Dealing with non-starter issues emphatically and conclusively up-front and throughout the planning process can help eliminate them as barriers to agreement, and honors the public's investment in the process.

Developing a Frequently Asked Questions handout early in the process can avoid rumors from getting started. The process of writing one also can ensure elected officials, planners, media staff, and other employees are saying the same thing to the public. An FAQ is a living document that can be expanded over time. Ecology has both [paper](#) and [web](#) versions that local governments may use as a starting point.

Dealing with emotionally charged situations

Shoreline planning can have a significant effect on shoreline users and property owners. Some individuals or groups may view the outcome as a risk to their livelihood or basic constitutional rights. If members of your public view the outcome as high risk for them, the situation may become emotionally charged and contentious. The practice of risk communication has specific tips that planners may find useful in these situations.

- Listen. Acknowledge the importance of their values and feelings first before engaging them in solutions. Provide a forum for people to air their feelings before getting into planning tasks. You may have to do this in several different ways and settings.
- Recognize and be honest about the values incorporated in agency decisions. Be clear about the source of these values (prior planning processes and surveys, or prior work within this planning process, for example).
- Always use facts. Be open, honest and responsive.
- Develop a varied and fair process that allows for the less visual and vocal to be heard. Stand up for a fair, civil process where everyone has a voice.

For its public hearings on SMP updates, Ecology posts a “Code of Civility” at the entrance to the meeting room. The poster states:

Ecology employees ask that meeting participants engage in civil behavior and join them in:

- *Respecting everyone’s right to speak and be heard, regardless of our differences.*
- *Presenting truthful information and nurturing honest, open conversation.*
- *Making this a safe place for ourselves and others, and to fully participate in a calm, respectful manner.*

For additional tips, visit the [Peter M. Sandman Risk Communication Website](#). A [downloadable primer on risk communication](#) is also available from the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry.

Working with appointed and elected officials

Elected officials and planning commission members are stakeholders. Keep these officials informed about the SMP update throughout the process. Be clear about methods of

communication with them, their role in the process, and authority to make recommendations and decisions. Discuss how their input will be reflected in the final product, and the preferred way for the public to engage with them. Citizen or technical advisory committee members can assist with periodic briefings or presentations to elected officials

Encourage them to attend and join in public participation activities. The elected officials should buy off on the public participation plan. A good technique is to remind them of the public's investment in the process using both numbers (number of participants/comments received, hours spent, dollar value) and comments from participants. Be clear with the officials about the commitment being made to the public and any committees regarding the weight and treatment of their input (See [Public Participation Spectrum](#) table.)

Ecology managers are available to talk with or give presentations to elected officials. For local governments just starting an SMP process, it is helpful for elected officials to hear directly from Ecology about the unique SMP local-state government relationship.

If there is turnover on the commission or council, provide a briefing to new members as soon as possible. Treat the briefing like any other stakeholder interview. Find out their preferences for communication and information, any misinformation that needs clearing up, their current position on key issues, and how they see their role in the process. Share the public participation plan that's already been approved, and any promises to the public that have been made.

Engaging the services of a meeting facilitator

Ecology recommends using a trained and neutral meeting facilitator to run public events. The facilitator's responsibilities are distinct from the local planner at a meeting. A facilitator advises on the venue and agenda, ensures that everyone is heard and respected during the meeting, and keeps meetings running as smoothly as possible. Besides keeping meetings on time and on target, a facilitator draws out audience participation, helping to address topics in an orderly, clear manner and assuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak.

The planner can focus on technical and process issues while the facilitator manages public input. It is difficult for the planner alone to effectively run a public meeting, present information, call on speakers, take notes, stick to the agenda and keep order.

Keeping a good record

Whether your public participation process consists of several open-house events, combines a survey with several workshops, or takes another form altogether, you'll need to determine in advance how to manage the input you receive.

Managing public comments

Perhaps the most important advice is to manage it as you go along. It is much easier to keep the record current than to track down information and comments, organize them and describe how they influenced the process later on.

Typical tasks include:

- Creating an appropriate, up-to-date filing system for all input received. This might include a traditional filing system for paper copies, email folders, spreadsheets or other methods.
- Keeping a record of the comments and recommendations received.
- Developing a method to respond in writing to comments. A spreadsheet is typically used to list the comment and local government's response. This responsiveness summary responds to comments received during particular portions of the public process and discusses how the draft SMP addresses the issues identified in each comment, consistent with the SMA [RCW [90.58.020](#)] and the SMP Guidelines.

Responsiveness summaries are required at two particular points in the update process:

- During [Phase 5](#), Task 5.5, when a responsiveness summary is required following the local public comment period and public hearing.
 - During [Phase 6](#), Task 6.1, when a responsiveness summary is required following the Ecology public comment period [[WAC 173-26-120\(6\)](#)].
- Keeping a current record of all public event attendees and their contact information.
 - Maintaining a list of interested parties containing the names and addresses (and other contact information) of all individuals who participate in any way in the planning process. You should start this important list at the beginning of the process and update it regularly to keep all interested parties informed throughout the local and state review processes.

Using anecdotal information from citizens

Many participants in the SMP update process live or work along shorelines. They may have first-hand knowledge about shoreline issues and conditions that may not be generally known or

otherwise available. Anecdotal information can be valuable and collection of such information is supported by the SMP Guidelines ([WAC 173-26-201\(2\)\(a\)](#)).

Assessing the objectivity and accuracy of anecdotal evidence requires a measure of qualitative judgment. Information about erosion problems along a shoreline stretch from residents of the area merits further consideration. However, information from an individual who wants to start a commercial ferry service in his residential neighborhood and reports that shellfish productivity is increased by landing barges on tidelands might not be quite so valuable.

Local governments should document anecdotal information in the same manner as other data and information obtained during the SMP process: name and address of the person offering the information and a complete description of the information provided. It will also be helpful to describe the person's relationship to, or interest in, the subject and possible "credentials" for providing the information (i.e., has lived in a waterfront subdivision for 30 years, works for the Washington State Ferries, owns salmon net-pens, is a developer who builds in the shoreline).

Documenting the public participation process

Documentation of the public participation process is required for Ecology's approval of an SMP amendment. As part of the SMP submittal requirements, local governments must provide copies of all comments received and names and addresses of interested parties involved in the SMP process [[WAC 173-26-110\(7\)](#)]. All e-mail addresses must be included with the interested parties' mailing list.

The SMP Guidelines require local governments "be prepared to describe and document their methods to ensure that all interested parties have a meaningful opportunity to participate" [[WAC 173-26-201\(3\)\(b\)\(i\)](#)]. Therefore, in addition to submitting the comments received and interested parties list, you also must provide Ecology with a record of all public participation activities.

*WAC 173-26-110: A master program or amendment proposed by local government shall be submitted to the department for its review and formal action. A complete submittal shall include two copies of the following, where applicable.
(7) Copies of all public, agency and tribal comments received, including a record of names and addresses of interested parties involved in the local government review process or, where no comments have been received, a comment to that effect.*

As with managing process input, keeping current on public participation activities as you go along is much easier than trying to recreate your record after the fact. Keep a record of all public participation activities and results throughout the process. This includes taking meeting minutes; documenting workshops, open houses and other meetings and presentations; keeping advertisements and web posting of hearings; and keeping records of any mailings.

Resources

Georgia Department of Community Affairs. “Community Participation Techniques” comparison table.

<http://www.dca.ga.gov/development/PlanningQualityGrowth/programs/SPRs/SPR.PartTechniques.pdf>

Institute for Local Government. (California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities.) Public participation plan examples. <http://www.ca-ilg.org/PPPlans>

Involve (not for profit) and Headshift (website designer) in United Kingdom. *People and Participation.net* Review of various techniques with universal usefulness.

<http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Involve/Home>

Miskowiak, Douglas, [Center for Land Use Education](#), University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. 2004. *Crafting an Effective Plan for Public Participation*.

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington. *Effective Communication and Citizen Involvement*. <http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/governance/participation/participation.aspx>

NOAA Coastal Services Center. 2009. *Introduction to Conducting Focus Groups*
http://www.csc.noaa.gov/focus_groups/

NOAA Coastal Services Center. 2010. *Introduction to Planning and Facilitating Effective Meetings*. http://www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/effective_meetings.html

NOAA Coastal Services Center. 2007. *Introduction to Stakeholder Participation*.
<http://www.csc.noaa.gov/stakeholder/>

Simon-Brown, Viviane. Oregon State University Extension Service. 1999. *Effective Meetings Management*. <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/g99003.pdf>

Washington Department of Commerce. 2009. *A Short Course on Local Planning – Resource Guide*. See Chapter 2, “Citizen Participation and the Public Process.”

<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=7548&Mid=944&wversion=Staging>

Washington Department of Commerce (formerly Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development). 1991, updated 2008. *Shaping Washington’s Growth Management Future: Citizen Participation and Community Visioning Guide*.

<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=6579&Mid=884&wversion=Staging>

**City of Bainbridge Island
Shoreline Master Plan Update
Citizen Workgroup
Draft Participation Agreement**

Project Description

The City is updating the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), consistent with the 2003 Department of Ecology Guidelines (WAC 173-26) and the Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58). Citizen Workgroups have been established with the input of the City Council and Planning Commission to assist with the update of the SMP.

Authorization of Citizen Workgroups

The City of Bainbridge Island has an ongoing commitment to meaningful public input and participation in the City's long-range planning processes. Public involvement is also required under the Shoreline Management Act, its implementing rules and the Bainbridge Island Comprehensive Plan. The range of public involvement activities planned for the Shoreline Management Program Update is articulated in the *Shoreline Master Program Update Public Participation Plan*, which was prepared based upon community input.

Pursuant to the *Shoreline Master Program Update Public Participation Plan*, the City intends to use Citizen Workgroups as one of several methods to provide input on potential amendments to the SMP.

Group Roles, Composition and Responsibilities

The role of the SMP Citizen Workgroups is to informally advise the Planning Commission and city staff on potential amendments to the Shoreline Master Program. Members have been organized into three *workgroups* based on sets of clearly defined issue topics, and one larger *task force* that will also address specific issues, as well as broader goals and policies. The specific topics assigned to the groups and member composition are identified in Figure 1 at the end of this Participation Agreement.

Members and alternates of the SMP Citizen Workgroups are expected to:

- Read all materials provided to members of the work group in advance of meetings.
- Come to the meeting prepared to discuss the specific issues identified in Figure 1 and in the meeting agenda.
- Keep comments and discussion focused on the meeting agenda topics and avoid discussion of non-related or tangential topics during the scheduled meeting time.
- Formulate recommendations during open discussion at scheduled meetings to ensure transparency and allow for effective public participation. (Alternates participate in discussion and vote only when a regular member is absent.)
- Endeavor to attend all scheduled meetings if possible.
- Each workgroup will elect three representatives to serve on the task force and report on the progress of the module group(s) and recommendations. The purpose of this feature is simply to share information across groups; the task force will receive the report and recommendations from the Workgroups. With the exception of this reporting function,

the Task Force and Workgroups will operate in a similar fashion for the purpose of considering recommendations.

The SMP Citizen Workgroups are temporary bodies and will be disbanded no later than February, 2011, or as determined by the Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) Update Joint Planning Commission/City Council Policy Advisory Committee. A tentative schedule has been proposed and additional meetings may be scheduled as needed. The task force will continue to meet after the workgroups are disbanded, but will not continue past November 1, 2011.

Conduct of Participants

The rules of conduct for all public officials and employees, as well as requirements for all public meetings are detailed in the *Manual of City Governance Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (The Manual)*. In addition, rules regarding *Respect and Decorum* are identified in Section 4.6 of *The Manual*. While the rules regarding Citizen Workgroups are not detailed and the rules related to respect and decorum in *The Manual* pertain to City Council meetings, our intent is to provide similar rules of conduct for the SMP Citizen Workgroups to ensure a safe, civil and productive environment. Basic rules of conduct shall be as follows:

1. Maintain civil discussion, listen to those speaking, and refrain from side conversations.
2. Speak honestly and respectfully. No personal attacks, insults or disparaging remarks.
3. Meeting disruptions will not be tolerated. Any person who continues to disrupt will be asked to leave (Resolution 2010-15).
4. Stick to the topic – do not use this forum to voice unrelated concerns or tangential discussions. A member may be removed for continued or egregious offenses of this rule.
5. Listen to understand. Do not interrupt speakers – please wait your turn.
6. Respect the meeting facilitators and their role in moderating the discussion.
7. Focus on common ground. We will strive for consensus, but differing views shall be tolerated, acknowledged and may be communicated as minority reports.
8. Focus on the future; learn from the past. Try to be open to the possibility of new information and insights.

Structure of Meetings

Meetings will be run by an independent facilitator hired by the City. Meetings will include the following basic agenda elements:

1. The meeting will be opened by the facilitator and the agenda will be summarized.
2. Meetings will include an opportunity for City staff to detail specific goals, policies and regulatory alternatives for discussion by the Work Group. Only alternatives which, based on analysis by City Staff and its technical consultants, have the potential for meeting the Department of Ecology SMP Guidelines will be considered.
3. Next, group members may ask clarifying questions of City staff.
4. The bulk of the meeting will be a facilitated discussion and deliberation by group members on the issue topics.
5. In order to use time effectively, the facilitator will call for a recommendation on each topic during the meeting after a reasonable period of discussion as determined by the facilitator and dictated by the limits of available time.

6. To ensure transparency and allow for effective public participation, work group recommendations for the Planning Commission must be formulated through open discussion in facilitated meetings.
7. A recommendation will require acceptance by a majority of the members in that specific SMP Work Group. Acceptance is defined as agreement or a statement that the member can "live with and won't protest" a specific recommendation. A minority report may be provided when necessary
8. Each meeting will feature an opportunity for general public comment near the end of the meeting. Comments may be restricted to three minutes or less based on time and written comments are preferred.
9. Recommendations will be compiled and transmitted to the Planning Commission. Minority opinions will be transmitted to the Planning Commission.

Meeting summaries shall be prepared by City staff and the meetings may be recorded. Task force and/or workgroup members will present workgroup recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Agreement of Participant

I, _____, have read this participation agreement and agree to follow it to the best of my abilities. I understand that repeat or egregious violation of the above rules will result in my removal from the SMP Citizen Workgroups.

Signature

Date

Shoreline Master Program Public Participation Event Checklist

Some items may not be applicable

IMPORTANT DATES

- Event date
- Date deposit due for venue
- News release submission deadline
- Advertisement submission deadline
- Mailing deadline (email and ground mail)
- Event planning meetings, with staff

STAFF

- Planners
- Support Team

AUDIENCE (who, how many, key stakeholders)

HANDLING TOUGH ISSUES: What tough questions or comments do you expect to receive and what should your response be? Reach agreement on responses among staff that will be at the event. See Ecology Publications #10-06-012 on [Tough Issues](#), #09-06-029 [Frequently Asked Questions – Shoreline Master Programs](#) and #10-06-003 [Frequently Asked Questions – Marine Shoreline Armoring and Puget Sound](#).

TASKS

Pre-Event

- Pick date(s) and time(s).
- Reserve venue -- meeting hall, tour boat, access to private property (walking tour). Check for:
 - Adequate number of chairs and tables to accommodate participants, ADA accessible.
 - Good acoustics, sound system, lighting, and ventilation.
- Invite staff from state and federal agencies, tribes, consultants, technical experts.
- Arrange for facilitator, recorder, main contact for questions.
- Assign responsibilities.
 - Preparing materials.
 - Handling mailings.
 - Gathering supplies.
 - Staffing sign-in table.
 - Handling microphones.
 - Setting up equipment.
 - Setting up and taking down chairs, tables at venue.
- Arrange for light refreshments. (Need caterer?)
- Reserve needed equipment such as microphones, laptops, screens, projectors and arrange for technical support staff.

- Other.

Public Notice

- Paper announcements.
- Email announcements
- Legal ad (needed for formal public hearing).
- News release.
- Updated webpage with relevant documents and announcements.
- Other.

Materials for event

- Comment forms.
- Sign-in sheets.
- Agenda.
- Posters/information boards.
- Presentation.
- Poster with ground rules/code of civility.
- Shoreline maps.
- Copies of existing and draft SMP.
- Other.

Supplies

- Projectors and laptops (bring a back up set), screens, microphones.
- Extension cords and power strips.
- Digital/tape recorder.
- Comment form 'deposit' box.
- Blue and duct tape.
- Pens/pencils.
- Light refreshments.
- Road and door signs.
- Flip chart easels and pads.
- Colored markers.
- Name tags for staff and public.
- Other.

Other considerations

- Arrange for extra security staff; develop a contingency plan for a safe and secure event.
- Prepare a media kit.
- Arrange for communications manager to attend.
- Prepare a list of VIPs expected at the event and share with event staff.
- Submit legal ad for public hearings for publication.

After event

- Prepare list or summary of comments.
Update website -- responses to comments, next steps.