

Public Comments and Questions from Members of the Public

OA Webinar - April 25 2012

The following comments were submitted by members of the public during or after the webinar and are provided for your general information. One comment and one question provided by Panel members are also included at the end of this document.

Entered into the Chat Box:

Dave Peeler davepeeler@hotmail.com

- Did John Stein mention when we could expect to see an integrated report from the various investigations underway?
- Although Ecology may be able to determine natural variations in pH using the kinds of information that has been described, it is certainly a question as to how effective the CWA could be in addressing the sources of ocean acidification. Has Brad, Ryan or the CBD thought of how it could be successfully deployed?
- It seems to me that, for example, reducing nutrient loadings to Puget Sound will have a positive effect on dissolved oxygen and hopefully on pH as well, but it seems like the global loading of CO₂ to the oceans will quickly overwhelm any localized response.

Barbara Smolko bsmolko@co.pierce.wa.us (Senior Planner Pierce County)

- What's the likelihood that NPDES stormwater permits will be expected to address OA?
- Also, do you see this driving clarification of nutrient limits in the State Water Quality Standards?

Sent via Email:

Jaclyn I. Ford, WA Department of Agriculture (jford@agr.wa.gov)

Just thought I'd drop a note – you've asked for input on programs affected/partners in the ocean acidification panel. I would like to submit that if we're talking about fertilizers/nutrients, then WSDA's state and federal fertilizer programs are relevant to the discussion. As I'm sure you know, WSDA has statutory authority to regulate the use and disposal of fertilizers for the protection of groundwater and surface waters. We also have a vast water quality monitoring program in Western Washington, and a precise land use mapping database that charts agricultural use across the state. In addition to those programs, authorities and responsibilities, our dairy program (and the Dairy Nutrient Management Act) are also relevant to the discussion. All of these would make WSDA a partner in this very important discussion. Please let me know if you have additional questions, or if you'd like me to prepare anything for the panel on our authorities.

Dave Peeler (davepeeler@hotmail.com)

The information presented today to the Blue Ribbon Panel was interesting but of course very high level overviews. I look forward to seeing the more detailed papers. I am bothered by three issues that came up:

1. It will be very difficult and expensive for Ecology to determine if pH levels are falling outside the natural range for 303d listing purposes, and even more difficult to determine what to do about it under the CWA. One need only look at the long timeframes and expenses for the SPS DO study for an example of how difficult this can be.
2. Reducing nutrients under the CWA may increase DO and acidification locally within Puget Sound, but is likely to have no affect on coastal waters. And, the continued and increasing global loading of CO₂ to ocean waters would seem to outweigh the localized reduction of nutrients at some point. So, although we can use the CWA to reduce nutrient loading to some extent, it may be too little too late to have much of an effect given the high CO₂ loadings.
3. Although the Panel was commissioned to look into shellfish issues as a driver, it would be very useful to determine if other ecosystem components in Puget Sound and along our coasts are at risk from OA. I have seen some prognostications that the entire oceanic food chain may be at risk. If true, this would be far more significant to human populations and the ecosystem than the loss of shellfish for human consumption. The report/strategy should at least touch on this issue, and note whether mitigation and adaptation for shellfish would have any benefit for other parts of the ecosystem.

Pete Haase (pgypsy@wavecable.com)

I listened to and watched the webinar today, April 25 – very well done, thank you. If the name list (to the left of the screen that was often shown during the webinar) was all those participating/watching, then several members of the panel were not there. Maybe they don't need to be part of everything.

The Northwest Straits Initiative was listed a couple times as possibly an incentive program that could help. I suspect the Northwest Straits Initiative, and the member Marine Resource Committees, is more appropriately a partner and a source of information and research ... I am sure Ginny Broadhurst can better suggest the fit.

The Shannon Point Research Center in Anacortes (part of WWU) has done work on Ocean Acidification and the effects – at least I have seen a presentation by one of their researchers – I think Jude Appel? was his name. They are also a partner and contributor of research and results.

Finally, in any public outreach and education, I think it is really important to give a simple and clear description of the various chemistry issues/actions – what role does nitrogen play? What role does carbon play? What do people do that cause such chemicals to have an adverse effect? I think many of us have been made aware that a.) the world is putting too much Carbon Dioxide into the air and b.) Carbon Dioxide dissolves in seawater and makes that water a bit more acidic than normal. But beyond that ??? A good grade-school level tutorial will be a big help.

Comments from Panel Members entered into the chat box:

Peter Goldmark

Can chemical analysis determine source of nitrate in PS? (Jan responded to this question)

Terry Williams, terrywilliams@tulaliptribes-nsn.gov

For John Stein: The federal obligation to the tribes under the treaties needs to be at the top of the list of mandates that drive federal participation.