

WEST COAST GOVERNORS' AGREEMENT on OCEAN HEALTH

WASHINGTON OREGON CALIFORNIA



Action Plan

THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNORS
WASHINGTON, OREGON, AND CALIFORNIA



West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health Action Plan

**Washington Governor Gregoire
Oregon Governor Kulongoski
California Governor Schwarzenegger**

May 2008



May 2008

Dear West Coast citizens:

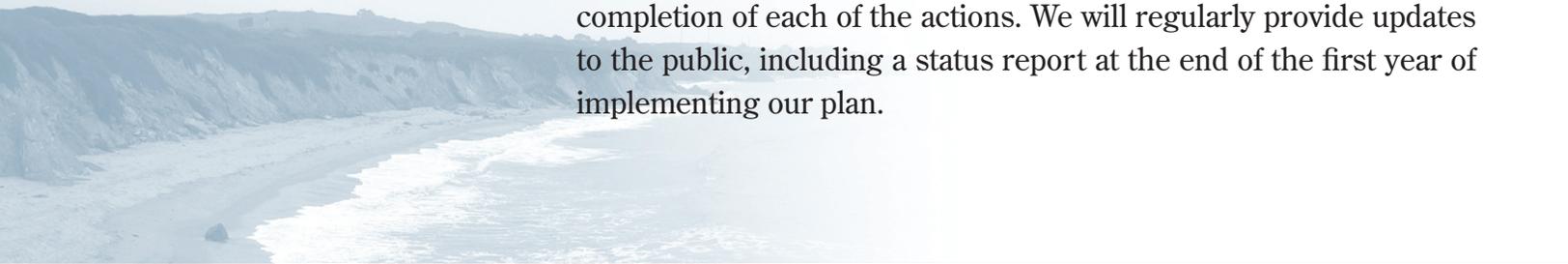


Waves on Ruby Beach
Photo Credit: Janet Lamont

Washington, Oregon, and California are linked in many ways: through the California Current large marine ecosystem, through the ships that travel between our ports, and through our economic dependence on fisheries and other resources that migrate along the West Coast. On September 18, 2006, we launched a regional collaboration to protect and manage the ocean and coastal resources along the entire West Coast of the United States. The *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health* recognizes that Washington, Oregon, and California can achieve more by working together on issues important to all of us.

This plan sets out an ambitious vision for the health of our West Coast coastal and ocean resources, including clean coastal waters and economically and environmentally sustainable coastal communities. The plan contains specific actions that will help us achieve this vision. However, we recognize that we can't achieve this vision alone – we will need the assistance of the U.S. Congress, federal government, local governments, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and every citizen.

We are committed to accountability and have laid out timeframes for completion of each of the actions. We will regularly provide updates to the public, including a status report at the end of the first year of implementing our plan.



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We encourage you to be involved with the activities of the *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health*. Whether you make a living off the ocean and coast, you participate in annual coastal clean-up days, or you visit one of the spectacular aquariums on the West Coast, you are contributing to the vision of the *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health*.



Child playing in the sand
Photo Credit: Janet Lamont

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine O. Gregoire". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor of Washington

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theodore R. Kulongoski". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Theodore R. Kulongoski
Governor of Oregon

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arnold Schwarzenegger". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California



Acknowledgments

The completion of the action plan would not have been possible without the dedication of a number of individuals across the three states.



Tidepooling
Photo Credit: Janet Lamont

In Washington:

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Jennifer Hennessey, Washington Department of Ecology
Brian Lynn, Washington Department of Ecology
Washington State Ocean Caucus

In Oregon:

Jessica Hamilton, Oregon Office of the Governor
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In California:

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The feedback provided by the co-leads of the Federal Working Group* and their staff was also indispensable:

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NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service

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NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service

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Minerals Management Service

Alexis Strauss, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX

Dan Pingaro, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX

*Appendix B identifies participating agencies in the Federal Working Group

Finally, the states appreciate the time and support provided by Gerhard Kuska and James Connaughton at the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Left watermark photo credit: Becky Stamski

Right watermark photo credit: Janet Lamont



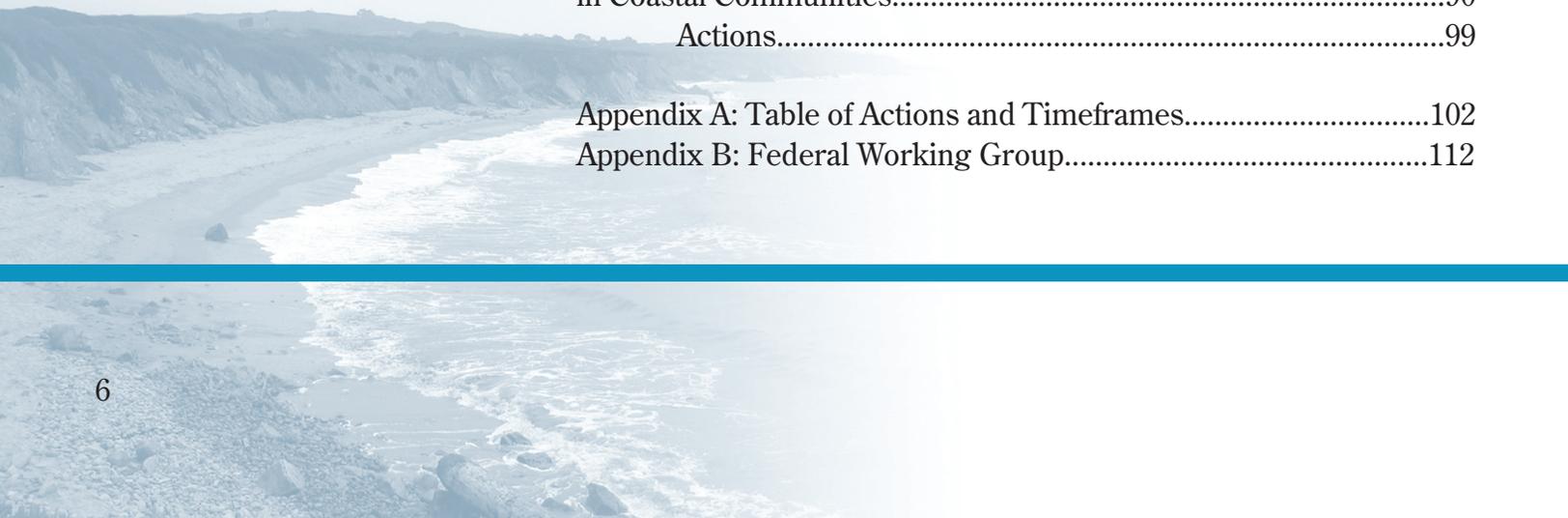
Port Orford Reef, OR
Photo Credit: Oregon Department
of Fish and Wildlife



Aerial of Washington coast
Photo Credit: Olympic Coast
National Marine Sanctuary

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Executive Summary

The Governors of Washington, Oregon, and California are collectively committed to protecting the health of the West Coast's ocean and coastal ecosystems and the economies that depend on them. On September 18, 2006, the Governors entered a landmark partnership by signing the *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health*.

This action plan guides that partnership by recommending regionally significant actions to address issues common to all three states. These actions will be initiated within 18 months of the plan's release, and many will be completed in that time. The states will convene in 2008 to launch major activities.

The plan's actions include the following:

Create a National-Level Commitment to the Ocean: Urge the federal government to establish a national ocean trust fund with sufficient funds to support state and federal actions. This was the primary recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission.

Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change: Conduct a West Coast-wide assessment of anticipated impacts of climate change over the next several decades and set a plan for how to adapt to such changes.

Ensure Clean Coastal Waters and Beaches: Launch a West Coast-wide effort to address coastal water quality concerns by urging the federal government to fully fund polluted runoff programs; reducing polluted runoff through a variety of methods, including low impact development; developing predictive capabilities for harmful algal blooms and hypoxia events; reducing and preventing marine debris; and improving our ability to prevent and respond to oil spills.



Stinson Beach
Photo Credit: Philip H. Coblenz





Improve Coastal Air Quality: Press the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to adopt low sulfur fuel standards for vessels transiting the West Coast. These emissions contribute not only to air pollution, but also to the pollution of our coastal waters through deposition. The states will consider establishing a low sulfur control area under existing authority if the IMO process is not timely.



Poppies
Photo Credit: CA Dept. of Water Resources

Protect a Healthy Ocean and Coastal Habitats: Protect the health of coastal and ocean habitats by mapping ecological communities and human uses and identifying areas that will benefit from conservation measures; restoring estuarine habitats, including coastal wetlands, to achieve a net increase in habitats and their functions; and preventing establishment of non-native species by reducing pathways of introduction.

Implement Ecosystem-Based Management: Manage on an ecosystem-level by assessing the health of coastal and marine ecosystems and establishing strong standards and indicators for continued evaluation; sharing lessons, approaches, and tools; strengthening coordination among the three states and their representatives on the Pacific Fishery Management Council; and urging protection of species at the base of the food web, such as krill, that support the health and functioning of marine ecosystems.

Reduce Impacts of Offshore Energy Development: Ensure that offshore energy development is environmentally sustainable by opposing all new offshore oil and gas leasing, development, and production; evaluating the benefits and impacts of renewable ocean energy development; and developing a consistent state and federal regulatory approach.



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Promote Citizen Ocean Awareness and Literacy: Improve ocean stewardship by integrating ocean science and conservation into environmental education curricula; and supporting public ocean awareness efforts and outreach to decision-makers at all levels.

Expand Ocean and Coastal Scientific Information, Research, and Monitoring: Advance scientific understanding of the ocean and coast by developing a regional research agenda; seeking federal support to fill marine research needs; urging full federal support for the long-term maintenance of ocean observing systems and monitoring assets; and completing a comprehensive seafloor map of all state waters of the West Coast.

Work for Sustainable Coastal Communities: Help coastal communities become economically and environmentally sustainable by supporting working waterfronts through grant processes and federal assistance programs; ensuring adequate public access to working waterfronts and revitalizing waterfront communities; identifying the current economic conditions of coastal communities; and developing regional sediment management plans to increase beneficial use of sediment in an environmentally sensitive manner.



Raft River
Photo Credit: Fred Sharpe



Introduction

The Governors of Washington, Oregon, and California formed a landmark partnership on September 18, 2006 when each signed the *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health*. In the agreement, the Governors identified seven issues of regional significance that they believe will be more effectively addressed through the collective effort of all three states. The three states are joining forces to help protect the health of ocean and coastal ecosystems along the entire West Coast and the economies that depend on them. By working together to forge solutions and leverage funding, and by supporting and agreeing to national and state-level policies on coastal activities that impact the region, the Governors hope to make significant improvements in ocean and coastal health for the entire region.

A Healthy Ocean and Coast

In this plan, a “healthy ocean” means that marine, coastal, and estuarine ecosystems, the watersheds that drain into these waters, the plant and animal communities therein, and the physical, chemical, and biological processes involved are diverse and functioning, and the economies and people dependent on them are thriving. A healthy ocean provides aesthetic, cultural, and recreational values. It also supports the character and quality of life of coastal communities and a vibrant, sustainable economy. Acknowledging that isolated efforts cannot address the breadth of degradation to the ocean, the states are committed to working together to address critical protection and management issues faced by all three states. By combining resources, the three states will affect positive change in the present state of ocean health.



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Why Work Together?

Historically, state coastal and ocean management policies and activities were often conducted on an issue-by-issue basis. In 2003 and 2004, the Pew Oceans Commission and U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy identified a global crisis of the oceans and an urgent need to act immediately. In their reports, they stressed the importance of regional collaborations to support ocean and coastal management on an ecosystem level. To address those growing concerns, a number of multi-state partnerships are coalescing across the country. As expressed in the commissions' reports, regional multi-state arrangements are important for addressing coastal and ocean issues that are intrinsically interconnected because they are within the same large marine ecosystem. Ocean currents and marine species do not recognize the jurisdictional or political boundaries where one state (or nation) ends and another begins. On the West Coast, the states of Washington, Oregon, and California are poised to collaborate – and have already begun to cooperate – on the key issues affecting major estuaries and the coastal ocean waters driven by the California Current, which connects all three states.

The Agreement seeks to advance the goals of the following Priority Areas:

- 1. Clean coastal waters and beaches**
- 2. Healthy ocean and coastal habitats**
- 3. Effective implementation of ecosystem-based management**
- 4. Reduced impacts of offshore development**
- 5. Expanded ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring**
- 6. Increased ocean awareness and literacy among the region's citizens**
- 7. Sustainable economic development of coastal communities**

History of the Agreement

In addition to setting seven priority areas, the agreement also defined four immediate actions for the states to undertake together. These actions included:

- Supporting new funding for nonpoint source pollution control programs
- Opposing new oil and gas leasing, development, and production offshore
- Developing a research plan for the West Coast region
- Soliciting federal technical support for addressing issues of regional significance



Driftwood on a rocky beach
Photo Credit: Olympic Coast
National Marine Sanctuary

Between September 2006 and June 2007, the states acted on each of these initial directives and are presently continuing to participate in the identification and prioritization of regional marine research needs.

In addition to the four immediate actions above, the states committed to the development of a plan with specific actions to address the seven priority areas. In March 2007, the states released a discussion paper to receive public feedback on additional proposed action items. The Washington, Oregon, and California Governors' representatives developed this action plan after close consideration of those public comments. Comments were conveyed at public meetings in all three states, submitted over the website, and sent to the states' representatives by interested members of the public, nongovernmental organizations, private industries, and local, state, and federal agencies.

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In addition to incorporating public comment, the plan was developed with the support of technical advisory teams made up of experts representing every state. The teams counseled the states' representatives on the status of science and policy on particular issues and assisted with crafting draft action items for consideration. The states also worked closely with a Federal Working Group formed by the Subcommittee on Integrated Management of Ocean Resources (SIMOR), co-led by the Department of Commerce (DOC), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of the Interior (DOI). Appendix B identifies the participants in the Federal Working Group. With the feedback of these federal partners, the states selected and refined actions that will be initiated within 18 months after the action plan's release.

Organization of the Action Plan

Each of the seven priority areas identified in the agreement is addressed in a separate section within the action plan. Crosscutting themes, particularly for research and monitoring needs, are highlighted in text boxes. A vision statement, goals, and action summary are defined for each priority area, accompanied by an overview of the issues encompassed by the priority. An analysis of how each state (with the assistance of the federal government) is presently approaching the issues is provided, and specific findings of need or fact are described. Each section provides specific actions the three states will undertake to address the issues.

Addressing Ecosystem-Based Management

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is an overarching principle that is inherently connected to each of the Governors' seven priority



Coastal Community

Photo Credit: CA Dept. of Water Resources



areas. Many of the public comments received highlighted Priority Area 3, the effective implementation of EBM, as an integrating tool for accomplishing the objectives of each of the other priority areas. Public input emphasized the importance of ecosystem approaches. This plan recognizes the connectedness of issues under each priority and the fact that many of the actions are requisites for supporting components of other actions. For example, the completion of seafloor maps for the West Coast (Priority Area 6) and a comprehensive geographic information system (GIS) characterizing habitat and human uses (Priority Area 2) will help establish baseline ocean health indicators (Priority Area 3) that are necessary for a better understanding of the status of West Coast ecosystems (Priority Area 6) and how they will respond to the impacts of climate change (Overarching Action 1).

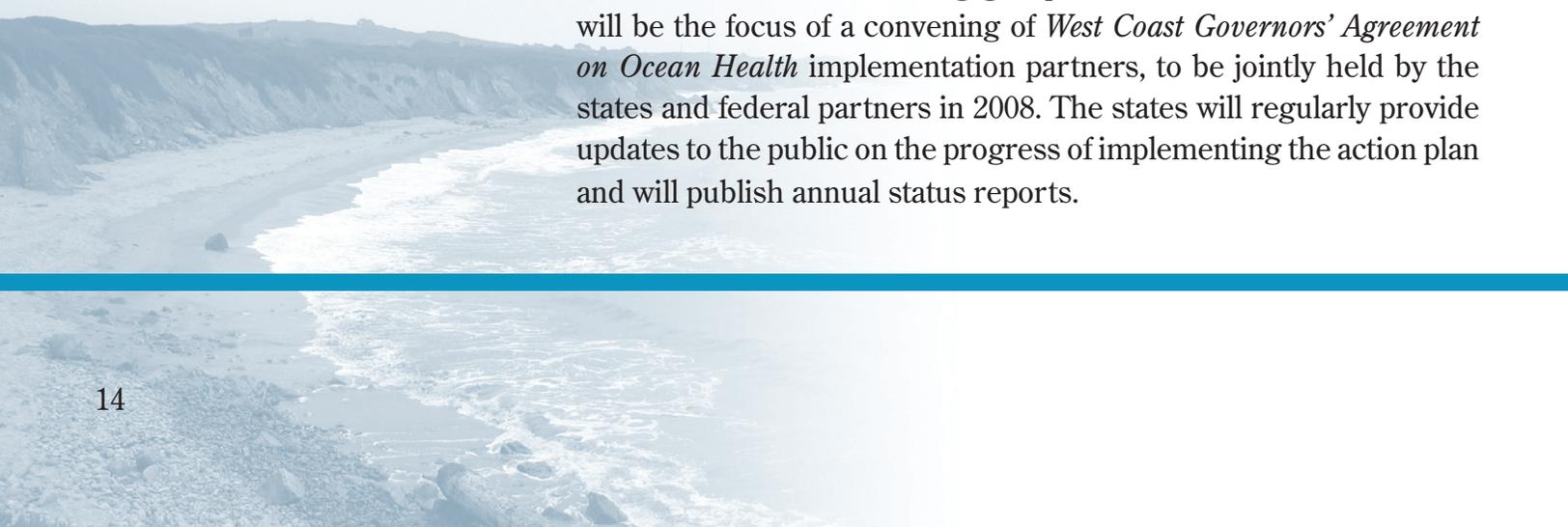


Views at Cape Elizabeth
Photo Credit: John Meyer

Putting the Plan into Action

The Washington, Oregon, and California Governors' representatives acknowledge that the actions identified cannot be fully implemented with existing resources. Throughout the plan, the three states identify specific support needed from federal agencies and other partners to accomplish the goals. In addition, the states will evaluate their programs and resources necessary to implement the actions in the plan.

The actions identified in this plan will be initiated over the next 18 months and have a range of timelines for completion. Many will require the establishment of working groups or committees. These factors will be the focus of a convening of *West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health* implementation partners, to be jointly held by the states and federal partners in 2008. The states will regularly provide updates to the public on the progress of implementing the action plan and will publish annual status reports.



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The three states are aware that many actions identified in the plan will accomplish multiple objectives. In addition to crosscutting efforts already recognized, overlapping solutions will become evident during implementation activities. Communication and coordination between the states and partners are paramount to success. Various workgroups will need to collaborate to avoid redundancies and recognize efficiencies.

Finally, it is critical that the initiatives undertaken to implement the action plan are closely coordinated with the three states' coastal management programs and water, fish, and wildlife resource management agencies throughout the implementation process. Many of the actions identified will be most effectively implemented only with the participation of these programs.

Potential Partners

Washington, Oregon, and California look forward to collaborating with many entities to successfully carry out activities identified in the action plan. Potential partners that may have specific interests in implementation activities include the following:

- Tribal communities
- Local government agencies
- State coastal programs and resource management agencies
- Federal government agencies
- National Estuary Programs
- National Estuarine Research Reserves
- National Marine Sanctuaries and other marine parks, reserves, and monuments
- Ocean observing system Regional Associations and the



PACIFIC GROVE painter, MONTEREY PENINSULA
Photo Credit: Robert Holmes/CalTour

Pacific Coast Ocean Observing System

- Other nongovernmental organizations
- Universities and academia
- Public citizens and interested stakeholders
- Marine industries and businesses (e.g., shipping, fishermen, shellfish growers, ports, etc.)
- Members of the private sector



VENICE BEACH, SWIMMERS
Photo Credit: Robert Holmes/CalTour

The states acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive inventory of those who may support the action plan. Convening in 2008 will provide the states an opportunity to create a comprehensive list of partners that will work together to implement the action plan.