

Ocean Planning on the West Coast

Overview

West Coast stakeholders are leading the charge to create an efficient, data-driven regional ocean planning process. This group, which includes federal agencies, tribes, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and the states of California, Washington, and Oregon, is working towards establishing a West Coast Regional Planning Body (RPB). Although in the preliminary stages of developing a West Coast RPB, the end goal is to create an ocean plan that improves the future of the West Coast's ocean economy, marine environment, and coastal communities.

The group is currently focused on three overarching objectives:

- 1. Defining member roles and responsibilities** toward establishing a RPB.
- 2. Defining the geographic scope of the RPB** — given the large geographic area, there is potential to break into sub-regions to ensure a manageable planning process.
- 3. Identifying issues and goals appropriate for ocean planning and leveraging existing work**, including enhancing data coordination, ensuring strong engagement with ocean users at all levels, and enhancing regional efforts by building upon existing state and tribal planning frameworks.

What will Ocean Planning do on the West Coast?

Support Ocean Health by including research characterizing populations of marine fish, whales, and seabirds, and important marine ecosystems.

Enhance Ocean Stakeholder Engagement through the collection and inclusion of stakeholder driven information and by providing a seat at the table for all ocean users.

Tribal engagement is of high importance for ocean planning. At the RPB inaugural meeting, 12 tribal governments were in attendance with formal representation. Additional work is ongoing with the tribes to enhance traditional knowledge of our waters and to create partnerships throughout the planning process.

Increase Innovative Data on Ocean Trends and Uses through the West Coast Ocean Data Portal.

The West Coast Ocean Data Portal creates a space to visualize the coast's rich natural resources and provides a tool to map threats to coastal areas, including marine debris, sea-level rise, and ocean acidification. The Data Portal can assist ocean and coastal managers in making sound decisions to improve ocean health.

Timeline

2006: West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) established a Regional Ocean Partnership comprised of the three West Coast states and focused on pressing ocean issues for the West Coast

2013- 2014: Federal agency coordination, state outreach, and tribal assessment conducted by WCGA

Fall 2014: Region-wide partner meetings held and regional outreach conducted by WCGA

January 2015: Inaugural meeting to discuss establishment of a West Coast Regional Planning Body

2015-2016: Formalize regional and sub-regional structure of West Coast RPB, identify issues and goals appropriate for marine planning, and strengthen tribal-federal-state marine planning partnerships