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## West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health September 18, 2006

### A Call to Action

Washington, Oregon, and California share a rich and diverse bounty of ocean and coastal resources that provide enormous economic, environmental, and social benefits to our states. Yet our citizens' continued use and enjoyment of coastal and ocean resources are at risk. Polluted waters, declining populations of fish and other marine life, degraded nearshore habitats, risks of severe storms and tsunamis, and impacts related to climate change are but a few examples of serious threats to the continued vitality of our ocean-dependent states. Recently, two national ocean commissions concluded that our oceans are in trouble and called for immediate, meaningful action at all levels of government to restore and maintain their health.

### Charting a New Course

Washington, Oregon, and California recognize these challenges and are taking action to address the declining health of our shared ocean. Each of our three states has developed world class expertise in ocean sciences and academics, and established a track record of innovation and leadership on ocean and coastal issues domestically and internationally. Our growing understanding of our relationship with the marine environment and its living and nonliving natural resources is leading us to explore ecosystem-based approaches to managing our coasts and oceans. Washington's Puget Sound Partnership and Ocean Policy Working Group, Oregon's Ocean Policy Advisory Council, and California's Ocean Protection Council are forums where these important discussions are occurring today. Each of these bodies maintains an innovative framework in which government and tribal officials, managers, scientists, citizens, and other stakeholders employ an integrated approach to protecting and restoring our coastal watersheds, shorelines, estuaries, nearshore waters, and open ocean.

Just as ocean and coastal conservation strategies benefit from coordination between state and local governments, so too can they be enhanced by greater coordination among our three West Coast states, among our state, tribal, and federal governments, as well as with our sovereign neighbors to the north and south. We need look no further than the offshore California Current to illustrate this need, as it transcends political boundaries, sustaining marine wildlife populations, regulating climate, and providing myriad other ecosystem services relied on by our states, the nation, and the world.

### Forging a West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health

As the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission acknowledged in their reports on the status of the ocean, improved coordination among governing bodies is needed, and oceans should be managed on an ecosystem level. While there are numerous organizations striving to implement these and other recommendations of the two commissions, we believe that more can be done. Therefore, we, the Governors of Washington, Oregon, and California, are launching a coordinated West Coast ocean and

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coastal collaboration to address critical ocean and coastal protection and management issues facing all three states. With this agreement, we are directing our staffs to work together during the next year to identify measures to address these concerns at the West Coast regional level and to develop a coordinated set of actions in response. Through this agreement we seek to advance our mutual interests in the following priority areas:

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

We anticipate that the opportunities for collaboration will include:

- Supporting and enhancing existing governance, management, and planning structures to address issues of regional significance where needed;
- Creating mechanisms to share lessons related to issues of regional significance learned from local, urban, county, and statewide conservation and restoration programs, as well as the work of non-governmental organizations;
- Expanding cooperative scientific and educational efforts to address issues of regional significance;
- Coordinating management strategies and approaches for those shared coastal and marine resources of regional significance; and
- Jointly engaging the federal executive and legislative branches on significant regional ocean and coastal issues that warrant national-level attention and support.

Within the six months of our collaborative effort, the three states will implement the following actions, at a minimum:

1. Call upon the President and Congress to provide sufficient funding to address the threat of nonpoint source pollution along our coasts, thought to be the number one water pollution control issue for coastal states. Successful implementation of the federal Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program by the states will require a commitment of federal dollars beyond current levels.
2. Send a joint message to the President and Congress reinforcing our opposition to oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development off our coasts.
3. Support development of a regional research plan for the West Coast in coordination with the National Sea Grant Office, academia, and other research institutions. Request funding and technical assistance to support key efforts, such as ocean observation programs, and sea floor and habitat mapping, which will be critical tools to address issues of regional significance.
4. Request the White House Council on Environmental Quality, in its role to facilitate the implementation of the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, to assist the three states in requesting and receiving technical assistance from federal agencies to address issues of regional significance.

We are directing our agencies and staffs to work throughout Fall 2006 with representatives of business, environmental, governmental, educational, and academic communities to develop further recommendations for enhanced regional collaboration on our shared priorities. We look forward to implementing the initial actions listed above within six months, and to announcing a more extensive set of specific regional recommendations and initiatives for action by Fall 2007, working in conjunction with our respective working groups, ocean councils, state legislatures, and the newly convened 110th Congress.



*Governor of Washington*



*Governor of Oregon*



*Governor of California*

## **Washington Highlights: Recent Accomplishments Related to Ocean and Coastal Health**

The residents of Washington State have had close ties to the ocean for thousands of years. First nations continue to rely on the ocean and the marine waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound for transportation, food, and other resources. The deep protected waters of Puget Sound have attracted intensive urban development, while the outer coast has extensive beaches with limited natural harbors. As a result of this diversity, Washington has addressed its two coasts differently.

### **Ocean Policy Work Group**

In mid-2005, the Governor's Office convened the Washington Ocean Policy Work Group with special funding earmarked by the legislature to review the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, summarize the conditions of the state's ocean resources, and make recommendations, including those related to legislation and funding, to improve coordination among state and local jurisdictions, and to better protect and manage ocean resources.

The Work Group is drafting recommendations on: Coastal Economic Development; Marine Resource Stewardship; Coastal Hazards, Erosion and Climate Change; Ocean Research, Observation and Education; and Ocean Governance. The final report will be issued in December 2006. The University of Washington's School of Marine Affairs is providing supporting research. Additional information is available at: [courses.washington.edu/oceangov/OPWG.html](http://courses.washington.edu/oceangov/OPWG.html).

### **Puget Sound Initiative**

In December 2005, Washington Governor Christine Gregoire announced a new initiative to protect and restore Puget Sound. The 2006 supplemental budget included over \$50 million for initial clean-up activities. The state legislature also passed two bills related to Puget Sound, including on-site sewage system management changes and provisions to prevent spills during oil transfers.

The Puget Sound Partnership, which consists of community and business leaders and four state legislators, will recommend a set of key actions to recover Puget Sound by 2020, engage stakeholders and the general public in increasing efforts to recover the Sound, recommend organizational structures and approaches to nurture the Sound back to health, review funding sources and set priorities for protection and restoration, and recommend how broad-based scientific knowledge should inform policies. The Partnership will present recommendations to the Governor this fall. Partnership materials are available at: [www.pugetsoundpartnership.org](http://www.pugetsoundpartnership.org).

### **Puget Sound Action Team**

In 1985, Washington established the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to protect and restore Puget Sound. The plan became part of the National Estuary Program under the Federal Clean Water Act and was later approved by the Environmental Protection Agency as the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Puget Sound. In 1996, the Puget Sound Action Team was formed to maintain the management plan. It is governed by a Council, which includes federal, state, tribal, and community stakeholders. The Puget Sound Action Team coordinates state agency activities, manages a monitoring program, publishes periodic State of the Sound reports, co-hosts transboundary research conferences, and provides environmental education and technical assistance. More information is available at: [www.psat.wa.gov](http://www.psat.wa.gov).

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### **Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership**

Washington is a participant in the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, the National Estuary Program under the Federal Clean Water Act for the Columbia River estuary. The Partnership has developed a comprehensive management plan for the estuary and coordinates a range of protection and restoration activities, including monitoring and education. Information on the program is available at: [www.lcrep.org](http://www.lcrep.org).

### **Northwest Straits Initiative**

The Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative, authorized by Congress in 1998, works to protect and restore the marine resources of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Strait of Georgia, and northern Puget Sound. The Northwest Straits Commission supports and coordinates the work of seven Marine Resource Committees and consists of volunteers appointed by their county governments. State and federal agencies provide scientific and technical support. Information on the Initiative is available at: [www.nwstraits.org](http://www.nwstraits.org).

### **Recovery of Endangered Species**

Washington is home to a number of anadromous fish species listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. To assist in the recovery of these stocks and coordinate local, state, and federal recovery efforts, the state has organized watershed and regional salmon recovery structures and has submitted several draft recovery plans to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Documents outlining the state's efforts on salmon recovery are available through the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office at: [www.governor.wa.gov/gdro/](http://www.governor.wa.gov/gdro/).

Washington is also the home of the summer resident orca population that is listed as endangered by Washington, the United States, and Canada. Washington is actively engaged in planning for the recovery of the orca and recently designated the orca the official state marine mammal. Washington has also completed a recovery plan for sea otters.

### **Other Washington Programs**

- Washington manages coastal development through the state's Shoreline Management Act and Growth Management Act (GMA). Local governments manage development through a special permit system that encourages water-dependent uses, promotes public access, and protects natural resources. All coastal counties and cities adopt critical areas ordinances under the GMA to designate and protect those areas that frequently flood; are geologically hazardous; or include wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, and fish and wildlife habitat areas.
- Washington has a comprehensive state program to prevent and respond to spills of oil and hazardous substances. Recently, the state adopted a zero-spill strategy and works with the Oil Spills Advisory Council to implement it. The state also participates in the Pacific States/British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force.
- Washington has adopted legislation designed to prevent the introduction of invasive species from discharges of ballast water and currently has a ballast water work group reviewing options for ballast water control.
- Washington has an active program to prevent and control aquatic nuisance species that is backed by state legislation and the Washington State Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan.

## **Oregon Highlights: Recent Accomplishments Related to Ocean and Coastal Health**

For over three decades, Oregon has been a national leader in managing its ocean resources for the benefit of future generations. The roots of Oregon's Ocean Resources Management Program reach back to the early 1970s, when concerns were raised over effects from potential drilling for oil and gas in federal waters and foreign fishing fleets working to within three miles of shore. In 1991, a council was created to give coordinated policy advice to the Governor, state agencies, and others and to prepare a plan for Oregon's Territorial Sea. This Ocean Policy Advisory Council (OPAC) is comprised of ocean users, local governments, other interested parties, seven state agencies, Oregon Sea Grant, and other non-voting members, and continues to advise the Governor on numerous marine issues today.

### **Statewide Planning Goal 19, Ocean Resources**

Oregon's vision for its ocean and coastal health was articulated in 1973 by Statewide Planning Goal 19, Ocean Resources, which is "conserve marine resources and ecological functions for the purpose of providing long-term ecological, economic, and social value and benefits to future generations."

Goal 19 requires that "all actions by local, state, and federal agencies that are likely to affect the ocean resources and uses of Oregon's territorial sea shall be developed and conducted to conserve marine resources and ecological functions for the purpose of providing long-term ecological, economic, and social values and benefits and to give higher priority to the protection of renewable marine resources, i.e., living marine organisms, than to the development of non-renewable ocean resources."

The goal also asserts that the "State of Oregon has interests in the conservation of ocean resources in an Ocean Stewardship Area, an ocean area where natural phenomena and human uses can affect uses and resources of Oregon's territorial sea." The 15,000 square mile Ocean Stewardship Area includes the state's territorial sea, the continental margin seaward to the toe of the continental slope, and adjacent ocean areas.

### **Ensuring Clean Coastal Waters and Beaches**

The Oregon Beach Monitoring Program (OBMP) monitors selected Oregon coastal recreation waters for the presence of fecal bacteria, and reports elevated levels to the public. The OBMP is funded by a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, is administered by the Department of Human Services, and collaborates with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Protecting and Restoring Healthy Ocean and Coastal Habitats**

Adopted in 1994, Oregon's Territorial Sea Plan (TSP) provides a framework for protecting rocky shore habitats, which include a diverse assemblage of habitats in rocky intertidal, submerged reef, and associated rocks and cliff sites. The TSP guides the activities of state, local, and federal agencies. A central objective of the TSP is to "implement a management program that allows for enjoyment and use of Oregon's rocky shores while protecting them from overuse, degradation, and loss."

### **Promoting Effective Implementation of Ecosystem-Based Management of Ocean and Coastal Resources**

In 2006, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) adopted a Nearshore Marine Resources Management Strategy with a mission to "promote actions that will conserve ecological functions

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and nearshore marine resources to provide long-term ecological, economic, and social benefits for current and future generations of Oregonians.” The ODFW will implement the strategic plan through a variety of programs, including the Nearshore Habitat Project, to map and assess the distribution and ecological function of nearshore habitats.

Governor Ted Kulongoski asked OPAC to take two important steps toward managing ocean resources as an ecosystem. First, Governor Kulongoski directed OPAC to implement its 2002 recommendation that the state designate a limited network of marine reserves for ecological purposes. Second, the Governor asked that OPAC advise him regarding the establishment of a National Marine Sanctuary off Oregon’s coast to help coordinate state and federal management of the marine environment and uses such as fisheries, energy development, water quality, and recreation, and to increase Oregon’s competitive advantage for federal ocean research funds.

### **Increasing Ocean Awareness and Literacy among Citizens**

Designated in 1974, the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (South Slough NERR) is a 4,771 acre natural area on the south coast of Oregon. South Slough NERR is affiliated with both the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Oregon Department of State Lands. The reserve encompasses a mixture of open water channels, tidal and freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, and forested uplands. South Slough NERR actively supports and coordinates research, education, and stewardship programs that serve to enhance a scientific and public understanding of estuaries and contribute to improved estuarine management.

### **Expanding Ocean and Coastal Scientific Information, Research, and Monitoring**

Oregon has the potential to be a global leader in developing viable technologies to convert ocean wave energy into electricity. Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Energy are working with a broad coalition to create a center of excellence for ocean wave energy technology with demonstration sites on the Oregon coast. Oregon is also an active participant in the Northwest Area Network of Ocean Observation Systems, which will provide real-time information on waves, storm events, and multiple measures of ocean conditions.

### **Fostering Sustainable Economic Development throughout Our Diverse Coastal Communities**

Oregon’s land use planning program, as carried out through the Coastal Zone Management Program, seeks to maintain and promote sustainable economic development in coastal communities. These actions are carried out primarily by cities, counties, and port districts with support from the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Economic and Community Development Department.

## California Highlights: Recent Accomplishments Related to Ocean and Coastal Health

Protecting the ocean and coast has long been a high priority for California. Californians showed their commitment when they passed the California Coastal Act in 1972 that established high standards for regulating coastal development. Other landmark laws include the California Ocean Resources Management Act, Marine Life Protection Act, Marine Life Management Act, and the California Ocean Protection Act. These laws require the state to implement ecosystem-based management using the best available scientific information. The work of the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy inspired a renewed dedication to ocean protection in California.

In response to the Commission reports, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger released his Ocean Action Plan in October 2004. The plan includes specific actions to enhance the protection and management of California's ocean and coastal resources. Significant progress has already been made in implementing the plan, which focuses on the four topic areas, summarized below.

### **Governance**

California called on the federal government to implement the major recommendations of the U.S. and Pew Ocean Commission reports. California officials have sent letters and met with members of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Congress. Priority issues include:

- Maintaining California's moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing
- Ratification of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea
- Supporting California's ocean observing systems
- Reauthorizing a strong Coastal Zone Management Act
- Sponsoring the Western Governors Association Ocean Protection Resolution

**Regional-level:** California is working with Oregon and Washington to coordinate ocean management along the West Coast. Key actions include:

- Developing the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health
- Coordinating ocean research priorities by developing a regional research plan with the West Coast Sea Grant programs

**State-level:** Governor Schwarzenegger signed a comprehensive package of ocean legislation into law, including:

- Establishing the California Ocean Protection Council
- Minimizing impacts of bottom trawling
- Reducing pollution from cruise ships
- Increasing water quality monitoring
- Establishing standards for offshore aquaculture

**California Ocean Protection Council:** The Ocean Protection Council, established by state law in 2005, is a cabinet-level body charged with improving the management of California's ocean and coastal resources. Major council actions include:

- Adopting policies to protect California's moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing, promote research and monitoring, reduce environmental impacts of coastal power plants, and establish a marine protected area monitoring program

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- Approving \$17 million in projects that address coastal water quality, river restoration, research and monitoring, sea floor mapping, ecosystem-based management, derelict fishing gear, invasive species, and fisheries management

### **Research and Education**

In September 2005, the California Ocean Protection Council adopted the *California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research and Outreach Strategy* that sets clear goals for California on research and education.

Key actions of the plan include:

- Committing \$1 million to ocean and coastal research
- Including state priorities in the national ocean research plan
- Launching a media campaign to educate the public about the ocean
- Organizing the California and the World Ocean '06 Conference to be held September 2006 in Long Beach, California

### **Stewardship**

In September 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger launched the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Initiative to develop a network of marine protected areas off the coast of California. The MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force, composed of prominent state policy makers, was assembled to guide this Initiative. The Task Force has developed a Master Plan Framework for MLPA implementation statewide and has recommended several alternative packages of marine protected areas to the state.

The California Watershed Management Memorandum of Understanding was signed in November 2004. An action plan to protect priority watersheds is currently being implemented.

California is developing the Coastal Sediment Management Plan to address coastal erosion and port sediment management issues with a work group of federal and state government agencies. This plan will help the state more effectively manage coastal sediments by evaluating major sections of the coast and inland watersheds, instead of merely focusing on localized case-by-case issues.

### **Economics and Funding**

The Schwarzenegger Administration has committed \$33.2 million in new state funds for ocean protection, which includes \$26.2 million for the California Ocean Protection Council and \$7 million for the California Ocean Currents Monitoring System.

California's Ocean Economy report, released in July 2005, identified nearly \$43 billion in ocean dependent revenues. In July 2005, the state held the first ever Ocean Economic Summit to examine the implications of the report for ocean protection and management.