

West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health Charter

Establishment:

The West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health (WCGA) is a partnership, established in 2006, by the states of California, Oregon, and Washington. Three federal agencies, Department of Commerce, Department of Interior, and US Environmental Protection Agency, support the states by providing technical guidance.

WCGA Mission:

To protect and manage the health of West Coast ocean and coastal resources, support ocean-dependent economies, and honor societal values of these resources through coordinated policies and actions as well as cost-effective leveraging of resources to effectively address these issues.

WCGA Scope:

In 2008, the Governors of California, Oregon, and Washington directed their staffs to identify measures to address critical ocean and coastal protection and management issues facing the three states, and to develop a coordinated set of actions in response. Specifically, the WCGA seeks to:

- Ensure clean coastal waters and beaches;
- Protect and restore ocean and coastal habitats;
- Promote the effective implementation of ecosystem-based management;
- Reduce adverse impacts of offshore development;
- Increase ocean awareness and literacy;
- Expand ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring; and
- Foster sustainable economic development in our communities.

WCGA Purpose:

The WCGA provides a forum for the three West Coast states, federal agencies, and interested regional groups to address ocean and coastal issues that require a regional response. The WCGA was formed to work with and build upon the functions and authorities of existing regional entities.

Guided by the WCGA Action Plan, the WCGA will produce an annual statement of priorities outlining key theme areas detailing specific actions and business of the WCGA. The WCGA shall execute actions and activities and will produce an annual accomplishments report.

WCGA Action Plan:

The WCGA published the *2008 WCGA Action Plan*, which will be updated on a regular basis, as feasible and needed. Updates will focus on priority issue areas that all three states identify as benefiting from regional collaboration. The action plan contains clear goals and objectives, strategies to achieve them, and action-oriented items with measurable outcomes. Public involvement is encouraged and facilitated during both action plan updates as well as creation of new iterations of the action plan.

WCGA Membership:

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the WCGA is comprised of three state leads and three federal leads—originally selected through the White House Council on Environmental Quality—including the Department of Commerce (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), and the Department of the Interior (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management), and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

State Executive Committee members will be designated by their representative governors or Cabinet-level officials. Federal agencies are responsible for designation of federal representatives.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- State and Federal Leads act to:
 - Identify and address critical issues that can be better addressed through a regional response rather than a state-by-state approach;
 - Provide strategic guidance and helping to guide the timely progress of ACTs on activities in the WCGA Action Plan;
 - Ensure the best composition of people are on the ACTS to carry out the actions;
 - Seek funds for advancement of regional issues;
 - Oversee the appropriate use of grants and other funds; and
 - Form standing or ad hoc committees to address emerging issues that will be chaired by a member of the Executive Committee or their alternate.
- The three State leads are responsible for coordinating with other states, regions, tribal governments on national issues in order to ensure the West Coast-wide perspective is taken into consideration.
- Federal leads provide direct support to the WCGA and coordinate with other federal agencies to help foster a cooperative and effective partnership.

Action Coordination Teams

The WCGA may convene an Action Coordination Team (ACT), comprised of individuals from state and federal agencies, tribal governments, academia, industry, and other stakeholders, when appropriate, to identify actions to carry out the action plan. In some cases, an ACT will be charged not only with identifying topic specific actions, but also for implementing these actions—subject to availability of funding and other resources.

Once a theme and purpose is approved for an ACT, the Executive Committee will determine initial members from each state and relevant federal agencies and appoint a Chair and/or Co-Chairs for the ACT. The core ACT members can then recommend additional members through the Chair and Co-Chair. Additional ACT members are approved by the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee members may also appoint members from their respective state or federal arenas, including suggested replacement of members when necessary, such as when an ACT member changes jobs or job duties. Chairs and co-chairs may periodically review activity and involvement of members and suggest replacements or removal as appropriate.

To enable manageable, balanced, and productive ACTs, it is the policy of the Executive Committee to limit the membership of ACTs at no more than 15 individuals, to seek regional balance in membership, to seek balance between federal and state representation, and to appoint ACT members with appropriate professional backgrounds, expertise, or resources to contribute to the topic or activities. Once established, if an ACT has fewer than 15 members and would be further strengthened through participation of additional members, the Chair or Co-chairs, POCs, or Executive Committee members may make recommendations on new members to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is responsible for approving any additional members for an ACT.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- ACT Chairs and Co-Chairs— ACT Chairs and Co-Chairs serve in their capacity as long as they are interested and upon agreement by the majority of ACT members. The Executive Committee has the discretion to replace an ACT Chair/Co-Chair.
 - Develop and assist with implementation of their respective work plans;
 - Manage the membership within their respective ACT;
 - Provide summary reports to track progress implementing ACT action items and accomplishments to date; and
 - Share perspectives on critical regional and national initiatives.
 - Write letters on ACT-related issues and initiatives. ExComm requests that the ACT contact them before beginning to draft the letter in order to ensure that the letter is consistent with the policies of the three Governors. ExComm will help identify the appropriate level of signatures (e.g., from the ACT, state leads, or Governors) for the proposed correspondence.
- ACT Members— ACT members serve a minimum three year term, with the option to serve until they are no longer interested or able.
 - Develop action-specific work plans; and
 - Implement the plan and may serve as a lead for a particular task.
- ACT Points-Of-Contact (POC)—POCs are typically staff of Executive Committee members, serve at the pleasure of the Executive Committee, and do not have a specific term length.
 - Communicate information to and from the Executive Committee and the ACTs;
 - Assist each individual ACT in a number of ways, including coordinating regular phone calls for their respective ACTs;
 - Address issues across ACTs; and
 - Monitor progress of work plan implementation, generate progress reports, and answer questions.

Process to Consider Creation of a New ACT: New ACTs may be formed to address emerging West Coast coastal and ocean health issues. To propose a new ACT for consideration, an entity should draft a statement of purpose for Executive Committee consideration that includes, at a minimum, a description of ways in which the ACT can help the WCGA achieve its key priorities, a description of the emerging issue and its relevance to West Coast coastal/ocean health, a suggested list of ACT members, and, in general terms, a set of action items to be implemented. The Executive Committee will review the proposal and provide a response to the submitting entity within 60 days. In considering whether to establish a new ACT, the Executive Committee will evaluate the following criteria: 1) importance of the issue to the region; 2) degree of connection to WCGA priorities; 3) whether other regional entities are involved with or suited to the activity; 4) feasibility of suggested

actions and impact to resource availability to other ACTs; and 5) ability of Executive Committee to manage and oversee ACT activities.

Process to Create ACT Work Plans: The ACT Chairs and Co-Chairs lead a public process to develop, with their ACT members, a draft plan for public review and comment. After integration of public comments, where feasible, the Executive Committee approves the proposed final draft of the work plan.

Process to Update ACT Work Plans: For ACTs to remain agile and able to address emerging issues, ACTs must be able to update work plans without going through the entire process listed above. ACTs, in consultation with and with approval from the Executive Committee, can pursue operational changes to work plans.

Process to Consider Dissolution of an ACT: ACTs are created to address an issue of importance to the WCGA Action Plan, and are not intended to exist in perpetuity. ACTs may be disbanded based on the following criteria: (1) the ACT has achieved the majority of the tasks in its work plan; (2) other key priorities emerge as more important over time, decreasing the relevance of a particular ACT; and/or (3) resources are not available for an extended period of time to implement ACT work plan actions. The process to dissolve an ACT can be initiated by the Executive Committee or upon recommendation of the majority of the ACT membership via the Chair or Co-Chairs.

WCGA Coordinator—The WCGA coordinator performs project management, Executive Committee conference call set-ups and facilitation, content management for website, research, writing, materials development, fundraising, communication and outreach, and overall coordination. The WCGA Coordinator is a grant-funded contract position.

WCGA Sea Grant Fellows—In 2010, the WCGA partnered with National Sea Grant to create four two-year fellowships positions to assist the WCGA with Action Plan implementation. Each Sea Grant fellow is responsible for developing and implementing a theme-based work plan approved by both the WCGA Executive Committee and the West Coast Sea Grant institutions. The Sea Grant fellows also help various ACTs to coordinate with one another where their action-specific work plans align. The Sea Grant fellows are managed primarily by their host organization with regular updates to and input from the Executive Committee, as needed.

Decision-making process:

The WCGA operates on a consensus basis, and seeks to function in a manner that optimizes the ability to develop and sustain an effective working relationship among the partners.

Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings:

The WCGA Executive Committee will hold scheduled conference calls at least monthly, and based on financial resources, will meet once annually, at a time and location determined by consensus. If funding allows, ACT Chairs, Co-Chairs and POCs may also be invited to attend. Executive Committee members will be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred when attending Committee meetings in accordance with Federal and state travel regulations depending on availability of travel funds.

The Relationship of the WCGA to Other Regional Entities, Canada, and Mexico

The WCGA has a strong working relationship with a number of regional, multi-state, international organizations. The following are a few examples of regional initiatives that link directly to the work of the WCGA:

Pacific Coast Collaborative—Sustainable resource management is one of the key tenets of the PCC, an agreement among the three West Coast states, Alaska, and British Columbia to advance regional concerns on issues such as ocean health. The PCC was established by Memorandum in 2008, signed by the Governors of California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska, and the Premier of British Columbia. In February 2010, the three West Coast Governors and the Premier of British Columbia signed a PCC Action Plan on Ocean Conservation and Coastal Climate Adaptation. In 2010, the Governors of Oregon, Washington and California and the Premier of British Columbia announced that the four jurisdictions would be joining together to create a coast-wide marine debris alliance and to develop a detailed marine debris strategic plan for the West Coast. The WCGA can continue to play a leadership role defining critically important ocean and coastal health issues for the PCC to highlight and support.

Pacific Fishery Management Council— Pursuant to Section 302(f)(6) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), PFMC prepares a fishery management plan (FMP) for each fishery under its authority that requires conservation and management, prepares comments on applications for foreign fishing, and reviews and revises assessments and specifications with respect to the optimum yield from, the capacity and extent to which the United States harvests fish from, and the total allowable level of foreign fishing in, each fishery within its geographical area of authority.

Pacific States-British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force— The Pacific States-British Columbia Oil Spill Task Force was authorized by a Memorandum of Cooperation signed in 1989 by the Governors of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California and the Premier of British Columbia following the *Nestucca* and *Exxon Valdez* oil spills. The task force focuses on future spill preparedness and prevention needs, and provides a forum for the West Coast and Canada representatives to implement regional initiatives that protect 56,660 miles of coastline from Alaska to California. The WCGA works with the task force to advance 2008 WCGA initiatives relative to ocean and coastal health.

West Coast EBM Network— A partnership of six community-based initiatives focused on the successful implementation of ecosystem-based management along the coasts of Washington, Oregon and California. The establishment of this network was endorsed in the WCGA Action Plan as an important step to promote the effective implementation of ecosystem-based management.

Integrated Ocean Observing Systems— A federal, regional, and private-sector partnership working to enhance the ability to collect, deliver, and use ocean information. The WCGA Action Plan endorses adequate funding for Ocean Observing Systems on the West Coast as an important mechanism for expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research and monitoring.

Pacific Ballast Water Group—An entity that shares information and formulates consensus solutions on ballast water management and research issues of common concern to regulators, managers, scientists and the shipping industry on the West Coast. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission provides staff support to the PBWG. This group is mentioned in the WCGA Action Plan as one mechanism for achieving regional goals on protecting and restoring ocean and coastal habitats, particularly preventing introduction of marine invasive species.

Duration:

This agreement is intended to be a living document. The WCGA Executive Committee may review and propose changes to the governors for revisions and re-approval by the three West Coast states as needed.