



MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean Protection Council

FROM: Brian Baird, Assistant Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Policy,
California Natural Resources Agency

DATE: June 24, 2010

RE: West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) Update

ATTACHMENT: [Briefing paper on WCGA](#)

This memo provides Council members and the public with an update on the progress of the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) and the anticipated next steps. The WCGA is a regional approach to managing the ocean and coastal resources off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. The WCGA is currently moving from planning to implementation for on-the-ground projects to improve the environmental and the economic resources off the coasts of all three states.

BACKGROUND

The West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health is a proactive, regional collaboration to protect and manage ocean and coastal resources along the entire West Coast. Governors Schwarzenegger (California), Kulongoski (Oregon), and Gregoire (Washington) launched the agreement on September 18, 2006. The agreement calls for action to help 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, expand scientific information, research, and monitoring, and to foster sustainable economic development in our coastal communities.

After extensive public participation and close coordination with three federal co-leads from the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency, the Governors released their Action Plan in July 2008. The Action Plan contains 26 actions, addressing issues ranging from climate change, to marine debris,

to eradication of marine invasive species. On May 20, 2010, the Governors released a set of final implementation plans. These action-specific implementation plans were developed with the assistance of ten Action Coordination Teams comprised of representatives from the three states, as well as federal, tribal, industry, academic, and NGO entities. These implementation plans are designed to identify tasks that can be accomplished with existing resources, as well as tasks which will require new or increased resources.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite the fact that the final implementation plans were only recently released, the WCGA has been making steady progress toward accomplishing the goals in the Action Plan. For example, the Governors have already taken action in the following areas:

- ***Opposing Oil and Gas Leasing Off the West Coast.*** The Governors called on both the President and Congress to eliminate any plans for oil and gas leasing off the West Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington). The Department of the Interior's current Five Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program does not include plans to lease off the West Coast. The Governors will continue to work together to help ensure that such leasing is not proposed off the West Coast in the future.
- ***Estimating the Threat of Sea Level Rise for the Entire West Coast.*** The Governors initiated a National Academy of Sciences study to determine estimates for sea level rise for the entire West Coast, including related factors such as changes in storm intensity and frequency for the years 2030, 2050 and 2100. Although this project began as a California-specific study established and funded by the OPC, through the work of the WCGA, this study was expanded to include both Oregon and Washington. This will allow for consistent estimates for sea-level rise along the West Coast.
- ***Reducing Air Emissions from Marine Shipping.*** The Governors supported passage of HR 802, the Maritime Pollution Prevention Act of 2007, for stricter global shipping emission standards to protect communities living near ports. This legislation allowed the U.S. to negotiate at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which recently adopted an Emission Control Area (ECA) for all coasts off North America to be in place by August 2012. Large ships that operate in ECAs must use cleaner fuel and technology, leading to major air quality and public health benefits.
- ***Stopping Commercial Harvest of Krill.*** The Governors supported NOAA's successful efforts to ban commercial harvest of krill off the West Coast. At the base of the food chain, krill is a forage species for many marine fish and mammals, including many species of whale off the West Coast.

MOVING FROM PLANNING TO ACTION

The WCGA is now moving from a detailed planning process to the on-the-ground implementation of its Action Plan. To date, the Governors and federal agency personnel have been working with existing staff and fiscal resources. Of particular note has been the superb contribution made to this effort by the NOAA Coastal Services Center (CSC) who has provided staff resources at no cost to the states, playing an invaluable role in keeping the process moving smoothly. CSC staff will continue to assist this effort, but due to the comprehensive scope of this effort – additional staff assistance is necessary. Recent developments are encouraging:

- ***Action Plan Support.*** The WCGA received \$500,000 in federal funding for FY10 for implementation of the Action Plan. A Request for Proposal, being released by the Governors, targets on-the-ground implementation projects to be proposed by the WCGA Action Coordination Teams. The WCGA plans to fund three projects at \$125,000 each; with the remainder of the grants at \$20,000 to support smaller pilot projects. Awards will be based upon criteria that emphasize the need for measurable results, West Coast-wide benefits, and the ability to leverage other resources.
- ***Staff Support.*** The California Natural Resources Agency has received a grant for \$225,000 from the federal Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) to fund a Project Coordinator position for the WCGA. California has funding to support this position for approximately a year and half to two years.
- ***Longer Term Fiscal Support.*** The WCGA is also working closely with other regional ocean partnerships around the country to secure increased funding in the FY11 federal budget. The President's proposed budget for FY11 contains a line item for regional ocean partnerships at \$20 million level, which may be dispersed by NOAA to nine partnerships around the country on a competitive basis. The WCGA, the Coastal States Organization, and other regional ocean partnerships are working with Congress to increase the funding to \$30 million. At the same time, the WCGA has put in a request for \$5 million for the WCGA alone, in the event that a national funding approach does not occur. Both Congressman Farr and Congresswoman Capps have supported the WCGA's appropriations request which has not yet been acted upon in the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations subcommittee.

If the WCGA were to receive increased funding in the FY11 budget, the Action Coordination Teams would be able to undertake many more of the tasks outlined in their implementation plans. Some examples of projects include:

- ***Climate Change.*** All three states are working to complete high resolution maps of the seafloor off their coasts. This crucial information will help communities prepare for tsunami waves, inform the siting of ocean uses such as wave energy projects, and inform fisheries management. It will also inform the states plan to develop a pilot program to help enable on-the-ground adaptation strategies including a guidebook to help provide necessary outreach and education materials for adaptation.
- ***Sustainable Offshore Energy.*** Preparing a coastal siting handbook used by the three states to evaluate the potential for renewable ocean energy projects off our coast and to assemble data and information to help identify and address potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of such development. This will ensure that renewable energy development occurs in areas least likely to harm fisheries, sensitive marine habitats, or local coastal communities.
- ***Addressing Invasive Species.*** Preparing a plan for all three states to use to help identify and eradicate marine invasive species. The states plan to focus initially on eradication of introduced *Spartina* (cordgrass) along entire coast. States are sharing expertise and methods, but the key is to work together to coordinate efforts to eventually achieve complete eradication.

Marine Debris. Creating a marine debris alliance to guide efforts for all three states to reduce or eliminate marine debris from coast and ocean waters. Marine debris threatens resources off the entire west coast and the states hope to develop an implementation plan with timelines, identification of resources, and other methods to work together to address this issue.

NEXT STEPS

The WCGA will move forward with the hiring of a project coordinator and conducting its first \$500,000 grant program for implementation projects. In the coming year, the three states will work closely with the Obama administration and Congress to advocate for significant new funding and technical support for the WCGA, as well as for other regional ocean governance organizations around the country.