

Washington Coast Marine Spatial Planning Frequently Asked Questions



Ocean and coastal environments in Washington are critical to our economy, culture and quality of life. Coastal communities have a rich history and share a unique relationship to coastal resources. Yet increasing demands on these resources, including potential new uses for them, create conflicts. In addition, it's important to ensure that ocean and coastal ecosystems remain healthy for future generations to enjoy.

What is marine spatial planning?

Marine spatial planning is a public process that uses data on marine resources and human activities, as well as other information, to determine the most appropriate locations for human use of those resources. The planning process develops a shared vision, goals and objectives to guide the evaluation of all of this information, develops and assesses management options, and creates a plan that balances the needs and goals of society, the economy and the marine environment.

What does a marine spatial plan look like? What will a plan look like in Washington state?

A final plan depends on the management needs, goals and objectives identified in the planning process. In 2013, stakeholder groups, local, state and federal agencies and tribes will work together to draft the preliminary goals and objectives for planning Washington's Pacific Coast.

Adopted in 2010, the state's marine spatial planning law provides a way for governments, interest groups and individuals to work together to ensure that ocean and coastal resources:

- Are healthy now and for future generations.
- Are managed and used fairly and appropriately.
- Continue to support important economic and traditional uses while providing for new opportunities.

Washington's law requires the final plan to provide guidance, using existing regulations and agencies to implement its policies. For example, an aquatic land lease issued by Department of Natural Resources would use the marine spatial plan to help guide the lease decision.

Marine spatial plans in many other states have focused on appropriate locations and locations to avoid for renewable energy developments. Some of these plans also seek to protect sensitive environments and traditional uses.

How can marine spatial planning improve management of marine resources?

Marine spatial planning can improve management of marine resources in several ways. Often it is used to:

- Identify existing and emerging uses of marine resources.
- Reduce conflicts among uses of marine resources.
- Ensure compatibility of uses of marine resources.
- Reduce environmental impacts from human uses.
- Maximize the benefits that resource users receive from the ocean.
- Inform local governments and other agencies developing regulations related to marine resources.
- Significantly increase coordination among state, tribal and federal resource agencies.

What is the state doing related to marine spatial planning?

Recognizing the utility of marine spatial planning to address resource management and use conflicts in Washington waters, the state adopted the Marine Waters Planning and Management Act in 2010. In January 2011, the state produced a legislative report in consultation with tribes, federal agencies and stakeholders that assessed the various requirements of the law and provided recommendations on ways to meet those needs through the planning process.

In March 2012, the state legislature provided funds to begin laying the foundation for marine spatial planning on Washington's Pacific Coast. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is administering these funds for a variety of projects. The funding categories and projects tie directly to the plan's legal requirements and legislative report's recommendations.

Projects currently under way fall into the following categories:

- Mapping
- Ecosystem Assessment
- Data Tools
- Stakeholder Outreach

Through the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council, DNR worked with other state agencies, tribes, coastal marine resource committees and stakeholders to gather project ideas and collect feedback on proposed projects.

Who does marine spatial planning?

Marine spatial planning emphasizes meaningful coordination among all resource users and resource managers. Central to Washington's marine spatial planning is coordinating with key players who are invested in the present and future uses of Washington's rich marine resources.

The planning process provides a way for federal and state agencies, tribes, local governments, academic experts, private industries and other interests to compile ocean data and information for making management decisions. State agencies coordinating the planning process will continue to actively involve the public and local stakeholder groups and engage governmental partners.



The marine spatial planning law requires the use of a state interagency team to coordinate the development of the plan. The Department of Ecology is the lead agency for coordinating the planning process. DNR is administering the funding for marine spatial planning projects. Washington Sea Grant is supporting outreach and scientific input on the planning process. Other agencies, such as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and State Parks, are also involved in the interagency team.

In addition, the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council provides local perspectives and advice to the state agencies throughout the process. The council is a diverse stakeholder group representing recreation, commercial fishing, the public, education, conservation, energy, shipping, economic development, ports, science, shellfish aquaculture and the coastal marine resource committees.

How does marine spatial planning relate to work by various agencies?

Washington state agencies already manage different aspects of marine uses and resources. However, this approach to management has often failed to comprehensively address the overall health and use of marine resources in a coordinated manner.

Marine spatial planning is a process to improve and align decisions for marine waters in a comprehensive plan with common goals and shared outcomes. Marine spatial planning has a unique focus on a wide range of mapped information to guide decisions. As a result, this planning can integrate and complement existing resource management and improve data used for decision-making.

How does marine spatial planning relate to permitting?

Good planning informs the regulatory framework, which includes permitting requirements and decision criteria. As noted above, marine spatial planning can identify existing and emerging uses of marine resources. This can allow for the development of permitting regulations to address new proposals. Such regulations can be designed to reduce conflicts and ensure compatibility among uses of marine resources.

Planning and permitting processes often do not address questions the same way or with the same level of detail. For example, the planning process is not designed to answer specific questions about the effects of a single project or technology at a particular location. This is evaluated through a permitting process, once a specific project is proposed. The planning process is designed to comprehensively consider, using coast-wide data, the most and least suitable locations for a particular use. The specific location of a project is ultimately decided through a permitting process.



How are we engaging scientists in the planning process?

Scientists can provide input on data quality and availability and identify gaps and limitations in existing data. Washington Sea Grant will form and coordinate input from a technical science committee of scientists from academia, tribes and state and federal agencies. These scientists will provide feedback in their specific area of expertise, such as oceanography, biology, fisheries, economics and social sciences.

Scientists can also support planning by conducting projects that gather or synthesize best available science on particular topics or specific questions. Some key criteria for selecting experts for projects include those who have: 1) appropriate skills and subject-matter expertise; and 2) experience in providing or synthesizing information for similar management or planning efforts.

Finally, scientists can bring the latest scientific information into technical workshops, such as those planned for ecosystem assessment and indicators, and seafloor mapping.

What is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder is an individual, group or organization that is likely to be affected by an outcome or decision. This includes resource users and groups representing interests such as commercial fishing, aquaculture, recreation, conservation, etc. Washington's marine spatial planning process will engage all stakeholders who would like to participate in the process. The planning process recognizes that not all stakeholders are the same. For example, some stakeholders rely on marine resources for their livelihoods. These stakeholders could be directly affected by outcomes that change where, how or when they use or access the marine space and resources. The planning process will recognize the unique relationship and interests these stakeholders have with marine resources.

How does this relate to work by the federal government?

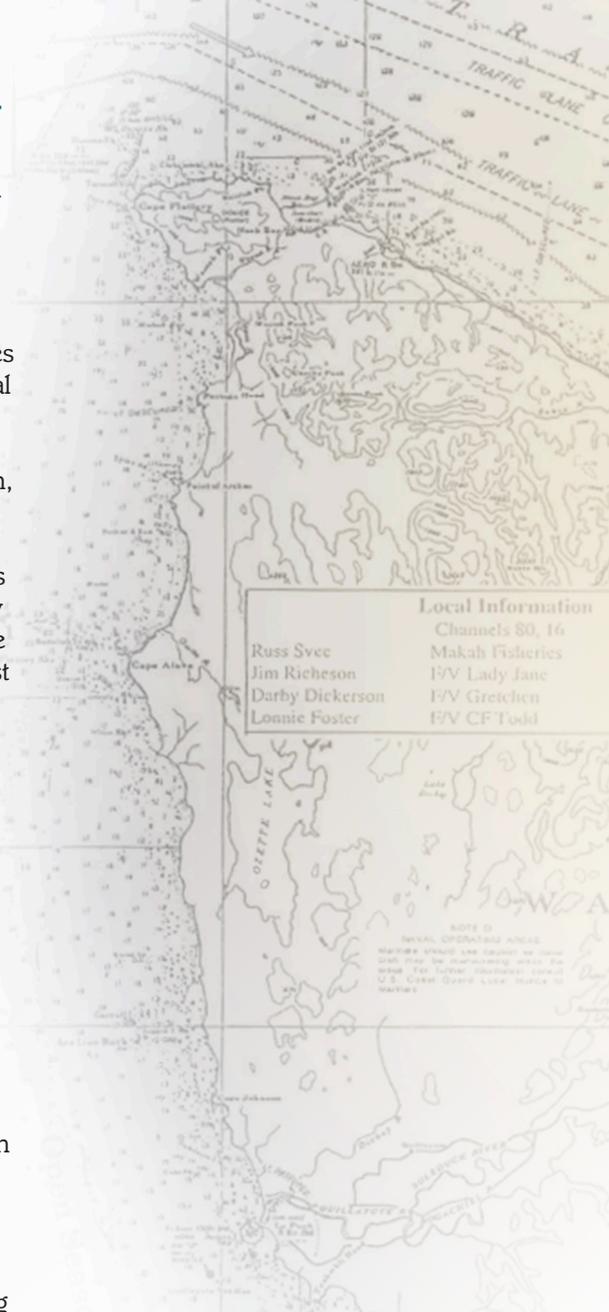
In 2010, Executive Order 13547 created a National Ocean Policy, with nine strategic priorities, and established the National Ocean Council to coordinate federal agency collaboration on this policy. One of the priorities is the development of regional Coastal and Marine Spatial Plans (CMSP). The West Coast region includes the offshore areas of Washington, Oregon, and California. The national framework for CMSP acknowledges state management plans as building blocks for larger regional planning efforts. By developing a plan, Washington will be positioned to contribute to future West Coast planning efforts and to ensure that the state's plan and priorities are represented in that process.

How can I participate in the process?

We are currently conducting outreach on the coast — including meetings and informational events — to engage a wide range of interested citizens and stakeholders. In addition, a series of online webinars will provide opportunities to learn more about marine spatial planning in Washington.

Public involvement will help shape the planning process and is crucial to the success of marine spatial planning in Washington. All Washingtonians are invited to share their insights and concerns about marine spatial planning with the project management team through the contact information at right.

Look for a new Washington Coastal Marine Spatial Planning website in early 2013. It will include planning information, educational tools and notice of events. Until then, information on marine spatial planning in Washington is available at the current website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/msp/index.html>.



MSP Lead Coordinator:
Jennifer Hennessey
Washington Department of Ecology
Jennifer.Hennessey@ecy.wa.gov
360.407.6595

MSP Outreach:
Bridget Trosin
Washington Sea Grant
bemmett@uw.edu
206.616.6129

Sea Grant
Washington