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Federal Agencies Join States to Launch Governors’ West Coast Ocean Action Plan

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency joined the governors of California, Oregon and Washington to launch an historic action plan addressing challenging ocean and coastal management issues along the West Coast.

The action plan implements the West Coast Governors’ Agreement on Ocean Health, a 2006 agreement signed by the governors of the three states involved to forge a long-term partnership to tackle obstacles facing the Pacific Ocean and its coastal communities.

“Close collaboration on a regional basis between the states and the federal government is a critical piece of the President’s Ocean Action Plan,” said James L. Connaughton, Chairman, Council on Environmental Quality. “The new Action Plan for the West Coast is a testament to what we can accomplish when we align our efforts and work together for a better future for our oceans and coasts.”

“The federal partners are pleased to support this commitment of the West Coast governors to ocean health and conservation,” said Kameran Onley, Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the U.S. Department of the Interior. “The Department of the Interior provides ocean research and resource management experience to help the states achieve our mutual goal of providing a healthy ocean for future generations. Interior agencies including the U.S. Geological Survey, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Minerals Management Service share a long and close working partnership with all three states.”

The plan commits the three states to collaborate closely with federal agencies, as well as ocean users, academic institutions, the public, and other regional entities on 26 bold actions to meet seven priority goal areas related to ocean protection. The federal partners are providing the states with scientific expertise and other support from their programs that correspond to the goals of the action plan.

“This plan will work to focus everyone on common goals to protect the marine environment,” said Alexis Strauss, Water Division Director for the EPA Pacific Southwest. “We all share the same desire to address the many ocean and coastal management challenges and this effort will move everyone forward in facing those challenges.”

“This action plan is a significant step in addressing the declining health of our coastal and ocean ecosystems along the west coast,” said Jim Balsiger, NOAA Acting Assistant Administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “Perhaps more importantly, the plan will forge new partnerships among diverse organizations with the common goal of assuring the health and well-being of our coasts for future generations.”

Examples of the actions that will accomplish the seven priority goals are:

- To meet the goal of ***clean coastal waters and beaches***, specific steps to combat polluted runoff and reduce marine garbage are planned and the governors call for stricter ocean-going vessel emission standards.
- To promote ***healthy ocean and coastal habitats***, the plan calls for the states to work with federal agencies and others to restore estuarine habitats, including coastal wetlands, by at least 10 percent over the next ten years. This effort will be aided by collaborative development of geographic information systems for the entire West Coast by 2012.
- To provide ***ecosystem-based management of ocean and coastal resources***, the action plan calls for establishing a West Coast information-sharing network during 2008 to increase regional coordination of ecosystem management.
- In considering ***impacts of offshore development***, the plan will explore the feasibility of alternative offshore ocean energy development and evaluate potential environmental effects of projects.
- In the area of ***ocean awareness and literacy***, the action plan calls for creating or expanding K-12 ocean curricula as well as oceans programs for the public and decision makers at all levels.
- To boost ***ocean and coastal scientific information, research and monitoring***, the action plan provides for long-term maintenance and updating of ocean research programs and monitoring infrastructure as well as a complete seabed map of all state tidelands and submerged lands out to three miles by 2020.
- To ***promote sustainable economic development throughout diverse coastal communities***, the plan supports actions such as local planning for working waterfronts to promote sustainable fisheries and help coast-dependent businesses and expansion of environmentally responsible “green ports” and “clean marinas.”

The states released a draft action plan for public review in October 2007. Feedback from the Federal Working Group along with extensive public comment helped the states select and refine the proposed actions for the final action plan released today.

The activities in the final action plan will be initiated within 18 months of the plan’s release, and some will be completed during that time. The governors have formally committed to report on the status of actions at the end of two years.

To download a copy of the final WCGA Action Plan and to obtain updates on progress, please visit the website: <http://westcoastoceans.gov>.

For more information, please visit:

U.S. EPA: <http://www.epa.gov/region09/water/>

U.S. Department of the Interior: www.doi.gov/initiatives/oceanfr.html

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://www.noaa.gov/>

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