

AN ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WEST COAST GOVERNORS AGREEMENT ON OCEAN HEALTH

*Lynn Longan, Washington, Community, Trade and Development
Chris Claflin, Oregon, Economic and Community Development Department
Mary Small, California Coastal Conservancy
Steve Freese, NOAA
Valerie Termini, California Ocean Protection Council*

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The economic base for coastal communities is directly related to the health and sustainability of the coast and ocean, through fishing, shellfish aquaculture, recreation, tourism, transportation, ports and other activities. Many local coastal communities are struggling because some coastal dependent economic activities are in decline. At the same time, these local governments are challenged with maintaining critical coastal or port facilities and infrastructure. A principal challenge to states, tribes and local communities lies in accommodating increased development in the coastal zone and usage of ocean and coastal areas without degrading or diminishing the environmental goods and services offered by the marine ecosystem.

In September 2006, the Governors of Oregon, Washington and California signed the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health. Under this agreement, the three states will work together by consulting with federal agencies and a variety of stakeholders on bold actions to improve the health of our ocean and coastal resources. On July 29, 2008, the three states released a final action plan that outlines many activities on a range of issues, including sustainable coastal communities. An Action Coordination Team (ACT), comprised of representatives from the three states and federal government, was established to draft a work plan and provide a framework to support working waterfronts, expand environmentally responsible operations and infrastructure at ports and harbors, assess current economic conditions of coastal communities, and develop environmentally responsible regional sediment management plans in California, Oregon, and Washington.

The ACT will develop a work plan to facilitate implementation of the action items listed in the agreement. The work plan will be centered on the 4 action items to foster sustainable coastal communities. The four actions include:

1. Support local planning efforts for working waterfronts to promote sustainable fisheries and prioritize coastal-dependent businesses and infrastructure through grant processes and federal assistance programs.

2. Promote and expand environmentally responsible operations and infrastructure at ports and harbors, such as through Green Ports and Clean Marinas programs. Support revitalization efforts for struggling ports.
3. Assess the health and economic vitality of coastal communities by identifying current economic conditions.
4. Develop regional sediment management plans to maximize beneficial use of sediment in an environmentally responsible manner to protect and maintain critical community economic and environmental infrastructure.

Generating an action plan is only the first step in developing sustainable coastal communities in the West Coast. In order to coordinate the implementation of the actions, the ACT will work with a wide variety of partners to develop a successful strategy that will result in thriving coastal communities along the West Coast.

Valerie Termini
California Ocean Protection Council
1330 Broadway, 13th floor
Oakland, CA 94612
vtermini@scc.ca.gov
510-286-0319