

Securing a healthy and productive future for the West Coast

Communities along the West Coast depend on the Pacific Ocean as an engine for commerce, a source of health and quality of life, a wellspring of economic opportunity, an integral element of our national security, and a haven for recreation. The West Coast is a central hub along shipping routes to Asia, home to the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and boasts some of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the nation. From changes in ecosystems to shifts in global trade routes, West Coast communities, states, and industries are facing new and unique challenges. In one recent example, warmer ocean temperatures were a significant factor in a large and toxic algal bloom that was responsible for the disruption of the highly lucrative Dungeness crab fisheries.

Leaders along the West Coast are working to understand what is happening in their waters and creating novel policy solutions to address multiple stressors. Numerous collaborative, regional organizations and various policy tools are at their disposal to address these issues. Identifying additional research needs and management solutions for changing ocean conditions will enable West Coast states to more effectively maintain ocean health and productivity.

West Coast Ocean Leadership Roundtable

As part of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative's (JOCI) effort to develop an Ocean Action Agenda to deliver to current leaders and those taking office after the 2016 election, JOCI brought together representatives from federal, state, and local government, leading scientists, and experts from key West Coast industries and nongovernmental organizations in January 2016. This document summarizes the key priorities, themes, and ideas that emerged from the discussion at the West Coast Ocean Leadership Roundtable. Held in Seattle, the meeting was designed to gather input on how our nation should be addressing West Coast ocean priorities. Specifically, discussion focused on:

- Hazards facing coastal communities, enhancing resilience, and adaptation
- Addressing emerging threats to safety and national security
- Research and management needs in the face of a changing ocean chemistry
- The ocean and coastal economy

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Priorities Identified by West Coast Leaders

Expand infrastructure investments to support coastal resiliency and economic development:

West Coast leaders recommend increasing investments in resilient infrastructure not only to protect vulnerable communities, but also to support local economies. New investments in port infrastructure, like electrification and dockside rail access, can help ports achieve their emission goals in addition to allowing ports to move goods more efficiently. Additionally, investments in “green” infrastructure and restoration not only help protect our coasts, but also support coastal economies by serving as fish habitats and creating opportunities for recreation.

Support and elevate outcomes from local decision making efforts: Local leaders along the West Coast have been working collaboratively and diligently to address changing ocean and coastal conditions for years, yet the impact of these efforts have been limited by resource and decision making constraints. A greater focus on the local drivers and on modeling local changes is needed to better plan for the future. Federal agencies must also collaborate locally to more effectively make decisions about and track issues within the region. Local successes like the Washington Blue Ribbon Panel on Ocean Acidification should be elevated as national models.

Demonstrate U.S. leadership and enhance international cooperation: While U.S. fisheries have made immense progress toward sustainability, global fisheries are struggling to implement practices that support their economies and ecosystems. The U.S. is one of the major seafood importers in the world and should position itself as a leader to encourage other nations to prioritize sustainable fishery management. Additionally, the U.S. should expand cooperation with our neighbors to better prepare and response to natural or man-made disasters.

Support the ocean economy and related industries: West Coast leaders recognize the integral role the ocean plays in securing the economic livelihoods of coastal communities. They noted the importance of encouraging young people to enter the fields of commercial fishing and research, and to eliminate barriers to youth pursuing careers in ocean-related fields. Leaders should also consider establishing community fishing associations, permit banks, and support for state shellfish initiatives. For emerging industries, West Coast leaders are also calling for the federal government to limit regulatory barriers to the expansion of the ocean economy.

Increase investment in research and monitoring technologies: Observation and monitoring technologies are important tools that enable leaders to make informed decisions about managing our oceans and coasts. Additionally, investing in observation and monitoring technology not only expands our knowledge of the oceans, but also supports search and rescue operations, ship tracking, and oil spill response. West Coast leaders are calling for the federal government to expand the reach and scope of these technologies and to fund the adoption of new and innovative technologies.



West Coast leaders recognize the critical importance of investment in resilient infrastructure not only to protect vulnerable communities, but also to support local economies.