

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 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.

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 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.

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. The Department of Natural Resources (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.

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 July 2012, the state legislature provided funds to begin marine spatial planning on Washington's Pacific Coast. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is administering these funds for a variety of projects.

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

What does Washington seek to gain from the MSP process?

Ocean planning can benefit a wide range of stakeholders and partners. Planning processes typically focus on identifying existing and emerging uses, reducing conflicts among users, reducing environmental impacts, and increasing coordination among state, tribal, and federal agencies.

Washington expects to gain the following from its MSP process:

- Improved baseline information on the marine environment and current uses like fishing, shipping, recreation, and aquaculture;
- Improved coordination among governments, include improved integration of existing policies and management;
- Analyses to support decision-making;
- Recommendations for siting new ocean uses, including protections for current ocean users and ocean environments;
- A clearer, more predictable framework for agencies to communicate about and respond to new ocean uses;

- Increased scientific research and the ability to adapt the plan based on new information.

Similar benefits have been observed by coastal states that have completed a Marine Spatial Plan and have been recognized by the National Ocean Policy. Washington expects these types of improvements to benefit ocean users, the marine industry, tribal governments, fishermen, and all recreational users.

What are the goals of this plan?

The goals will help guide the overall planning process but do not alter the requirements in the law. The planning process will work to achieve all these goals in the final plan.

Overarching goal: To ensure a resilient and healthy marine ecosystem on Washington's coast that supports sustainable economic, recreational, and cultural opportunities for coastal communities, visitors, and future generations.

Goal 1: Protect and preserve existing sustainable uses to ensure economic vibrancy and resource access for coastal communities.

Goal 2: Maintain maritime coastal communities from now into perpetuity.

Goal 3: Ensure the preservation of the marine ecosystem for future generations.

Goal 4: Develop an integrated decision-making process, which supports proactive, adaptive and efficient spatial planning.

Goal 5: Encourage economic development that recognizes the aspirations of local communities and protects coastal resources.

What current uses will be included in the plan?

A wide range of important coastal and ocean uses currently occur on Washington's coast, such as, fishing, shipping, recreation, shellfish aquaculture, and military training. Understanding these current uses is critical to plan for the future.

As part of the marine spatial planning process, several projects are contributing better data and information about these current uses. The list below highlights a few examples of these projects:

- Gathering more detailed economic and spatial data on recreational uses through a recreational use survey.
- Gathering more detailed economic information on fishing, aquaculture, and coastal communities, including tribal communities, through a coast-wide economic analysis.
- Compiling existing economic and contextual information on some major current uses such as non-tribal fishing, aquaculture, shipping and recreation and tourism through sector reports.
- Providing access to maps of existing data on many of the coastal and ocean uses occurring on Washington's coast through an online data viewer.

The marine spatial plan will include chapters that provide information and maps of current uses on Washington's coast.

What is the study area?

The plan covers a study area from Cape Flattery to Cape Disappointment, and all of the marine waters to a depth of 700 fathoms – that's 4,200 feet!

What new or expanded uses are being researched for the plan?

The marine spatial plan will address the following five potential uses in Washington's marine waters:

- Marine renewable energy such as offshore wind, wave, and tidal.
- Dredge disposal in new locations.
- Aquaculture in new locations, including offshore.
- Mining or mineral extraction.
- Marine product extraction for cosmetic or pharmaceutical uses (also called bioextraction).



It is the aim of the plan to ensure that future developments related to these marine activities and uses are appropriately sited so that existing activities and new development can successfully coexist, while maintaining a productive, healthy marine ecosystem. The plan will seek to evaluate and identify areas that these new uses should avoid, areas that are potentially suitable for new uses, and preferred areas for these potential new uses. The core of the plan will be to understand, avoid and minimize impacts to important areas for existing, sustainable uses and to sensitive environmental areas.



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

Washington state agencies already manage various 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.

Will the plan create new regulations?

No, the plan will not create new regulations. The Marine Spatial Plan addresses the need for coordinated decision-making across entities by providing common information, analyses, and recommendations for potential uses that support decisions. It will also provide mechanisms for coordinating review of proposals and implementing the plan across agencies. The plan does not supersede existing laws and must be implemented through existing state and local authorities.

According to the state law: “No authority is created under this chapter to affect in any way any project, use, or activity in the state’s marine waters existing prior to or during the development and review of the marine management plan. No authority is created under this chapter to supersede the current authority of any state agency or local government.” (RCW 43.372.060)

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.

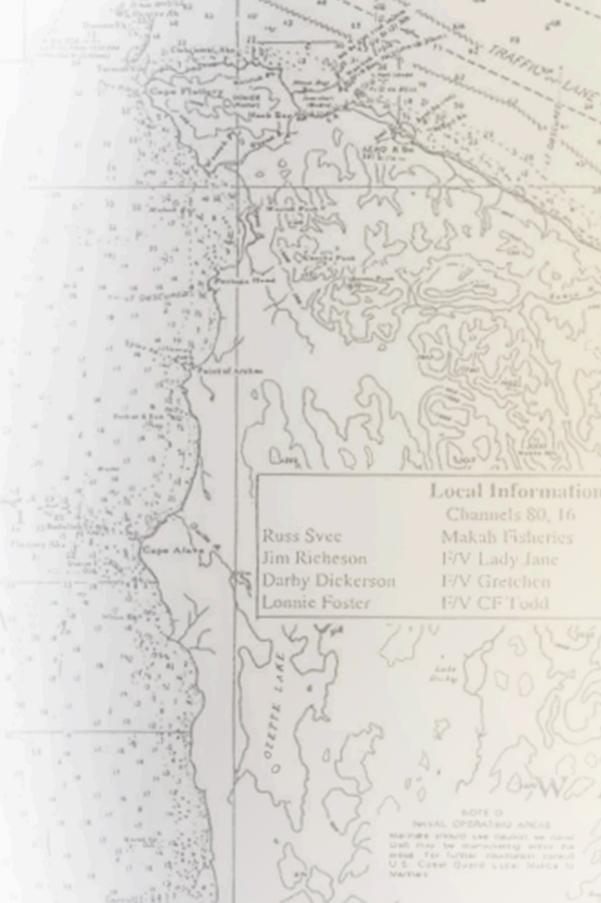
Planning and permitting processes often do not address questions in the same way or with the same level of detail. For example, the planning process is not designed to answer specific questions about the effects of a single project or technology at a particular location. This is evaluated through a permitting 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 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 below.

For planning information, educational tools, and notice of events, please, check out the Washington Marine Spatial Planning website at www.msp.wa.gov.



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

Kevin Decker
Washington Sea Grant
kadecker@uw.edu
360.538.2521



Revised 6/15