

WASHINGTON COASTAL MARINE ADVISORY COUNCIL

c/o Washington of Ecology SEA Program PO Box 47600 Olympia WA 98504-7600

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, 98504-0002

July 29, 2021

RE: Washington Coast Marine Advisory Council 2021 Recommendations

Dear Governor Inslee:

The members of the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council (WCMAC) wish to thank you for your strong support for coastal Washington. We appreciate your leadership in facing coastal hazards head-on and recognizing the often-struggling coastal economies, and we appreciate the expertise and energy of state agency staff. This letter conveys WCMAC's recommendations on addressing coastal resilience.

WCMAC was created, in part, to provide recommendations to the governor and legislature on coastal resource management issues (43.143.060 RCW). In 2018, you asked us to identify high priority needs and actions to carry out the recommendations from the "Washington State Coast Resilience Assessment".¹

At our June 2021 meeting, WCMAC came to consensus on a list of the most urgent and actionable evidence-based recommendations (attachment A). Our recommendations represent the culmination of a multi-year collaborative effort (attachment B). We believe this inclusive process accurately represents the many interests present on the Washington coast and provides a collective vision for supporting resilience across the region.

Our recommendations focus on building the organizational infrastructure for a sustained partnership with State agencies that will help our coastal communities address the challenging issues of the present and shape a prosperous future. Coastal erosion and flooding already cause hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage each year. Unless we begin to plan and adapt, sea-level rise and the increasing frequency of severe storms will exacerbate these hazards, causing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional damages. Ocean acidification and invasive species are unrelentingly destroying shellfish, habitat and lucrative fisheries. Families who have made their living in these industries for generations are unable to continue. Taken together, this outlook will cripple the economy of our coastal communities.

¹ William D. Ruckelshaus Center "Washington State Coastal Resilience Assessment (2017)": <https://ruckelshauscenter.wsu.edu/projects/past-projects/>

Environmentally and economically, we cannot wait to take action. Hard-pressed counties and communities have limited capacity to plan for future conditions on their own. The planning that is being done is incident-specific and lacks coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, tribes, and potential project partners. Coastal governments need the State to fund personnel to coordinate and develop long-term plans. This would help guide planning efforts, develop project proposals, test theories, and initiate funding streams. Without this support, the Washington coast will continue to lack the resilience to come back strongly from economic and environmental hazards.

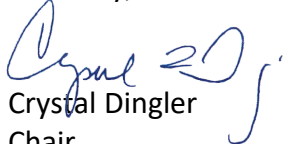
The WCMAC membership is committed to following through on these recommendations using our capacity as a group and through the organizations we represent. To accomplish our resilience goals for Coastal Washington, we ask you to consider the following requests:

- Commit to work with agencies to further detail and prioritize our recommendations.
- Consider where and how our recommendations can be advanced, including through your budget and policy actions.
- Join us for a coastal resilience briefing to disseminate our resilience recommendations with state legislatures and congressional delegates, Nation and Tribal representatives, agency leaders, and other key partners.
- Work with our State legislature and congressional delegation to implement our recommendations.

Please give your support to our voices so that our Washington coast can be resilient, thrive, and contribute strongly to the state's overall healthy economy.

Feel free to have your staff contact me at 360-581-5386 or cdingler@osgov.com.

Sincerely,



Crystal Dingler
Chair

WA Coastal Marine Advisory Council

CC:

- Senator Reuven Carlyle, Chair, Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee
- Senator Liz Lovelett, Vice Chair, Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee
- Senator Kevin Van De Wege, Chair, Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks Committee
- Senator Jesse Salomon, Vice Chair, Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks Committee
- Senator Jeff Wilson, 19th Legislative District
- Representative Steve Tharinger, 24th Legislative District
- Representative Joe Fitzgibbon, Chair, House Environment & Energy Committee
- Representative Davina Duerr, Vice Chair, House Environment & Energy Committee

- Representative Mike Chapman, Chair, House Rural Development, Agricultural & Natural Resource Committee
- Representative Sharon Shewmake, Vice Chair, House Rural Development, Agricultural & Natural Resource Committee
- Representative Cindy Ryu, Chair, House Community & Economic Development
- Representative Dave Paul, Vice Chair, House Community & Economic Development
- Representative Jim Walsh, 19th Legislative District
- Representative Joel McEntire, 19th Legislative District
- US Representative Derek Kilmer, 6th District
- US Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler, 3rd District
- US Senator Maria Cantwell
- US Senator Patty Murray
- Jennifer Hennessey, Office of the Governor
- Members, Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council
- Bobbak Talebi, Department of Ecology

Attachment A: WCMAC Coastal Resilience Recommendations

Type	Short Name	Recommendation	Desired Outcome	Implementers
Hazards	Establish a Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT)	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor create and fund a Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT). The COHORT will coordinate state and federal resources and assistance through staff located on the coast. These entities will draw from their individual network of resources and collaborate to provide strategic services to local governments, communities, and project leaders.	Provide long-term state assistance for a coast-wide resilience initiative, ² including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridging coordination and collaboration with other state and federal agencies (e.g., Commerce, WDFW MRC Coordinator, USACE, etc.) • Developing resilience strategies • Facilitating regional and local partnerships • Exchanging knowledge • Assessing risk and vulnerability • Integrating planning • Developing project scopes and design • Coordinating grant writing and strategic investments across agency programs • Organizing conferences • Strengthening networking opportunities and access to resources through an online data and resilience hub • Programming educational programs • Providing business incubation • Providing job training to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase local innovation, ○ Support intergenerational participation in resilience initiatives, and ○ Support emerging local leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Sea Grant • Ecology • WSU Extension • EMD • Commerce
Hazards	Options to increase local staffing capacity for resilience work	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor fund a study to develop options to increase staffing capacity in tribes, local governments, and special districts with the experience and skills to accomplish resilience objectives	Identify the most strategic and feasible options to increase and sustain local capacity to focus on coastal resilience. This includes the need for additional coastal planners, project coordinators, GIS/data specialists, and hazard mitigation coordinators who could complete risk and vulnerability assessments, planning integration, project scoping and design, and grant writing. Options to consider include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and local partnerships/cost-sharing • Grants and Fellowship opportunities • Other funding opportunities to increase local capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCMAC/ Ecology

² For more information, see: [“Options and Considerations for Implementing the Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team \(COHORT\)”](#)

Hazards	Coastal erosion technical assistance program	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor fund the expansion of Ecology's Coastal Monitoring & Analysis Program (CMAP).	Collect and provide coast-wide erosion data, coastal process analysis, education and outreach, and technical assistance to evaluate risk. Work with state and federal agencies, local partners, and tribes to develop comprehensive strategies and multi-benefit resilience projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Ecology
Hazards	Pursue modifications to federal standards	<p>WCMAC recommends that the Governor work with the WA Congressional Delegation to pursue modifications to federal standards that create significant barriers for smaller, rural, and under-resourced communities and tribes. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing matching requirements. • Providing flexibility for projects to investigate beyond the traditional benefit-cost analysis as defined in the National Economic Development Plan. • Allowing for advanced payments in lieu of reimbursable expenses. • Designating portions of existing federal funding programs specifically for smaller, rural, and under-resourced communities and tribes. 	Incorporate environmental justice considerations in funding programs so federal investments are equally accessible, competitive, and distributed to smaller, rural, and under-resourced coastal communities and tribes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress
Hazards	Sea level rise planning	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor develop State requirements for local governments to address sea level rise and provide adequate funding, guidance, and tools for sea level rise planning	Communities plan for and have strategies in place to comprehensively address and adapt to the impacts of sea level rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commerce and Ecology

Hazards	Hazard disclosures	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor update disclosure requirements to require disclosure of coastal hazard risks (including erosion, sea level rise, and tsunamis) in property sales	Reduce public liability and promote coastal hazards adaptation. This would also require disclosure of whether the property has ever received disaster aid. Disclosures would rely upon updated maps and delineation of hazards zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State's Real Estate Commission, in coordination with • Ecology, • Commerce, • DNR, and • Emergency Management Division
Economic	Area Sector Analysis Planning	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor fund Area Sector Analysis Planning (ASAP) for the Washington Coast to assist rural coastal communities in developing an economic development strategy.	Develop an economic development strategy for the WA Coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Rural Development Center
Economic	Coastal Conservation Corps	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor fund and direct the development of curricula, training and certifications for a Coastal Conservation Corps to implement a variety of restoration activities on the WA coast and build on the work and leverage existing programs from the WA Conservation Commission, Conservation Districts, and the WA Conservation Corps.	Support training and workforce development for coastal residents and youth while achieving conservation and restoration outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Conservation Commission • WA Conservation Corps
Economic	New Commerce FTE	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor create a Coastal Economic Resilience Community Outreach Specialist at the Department of Commerce to connect communities with state and federal resources, develop and organize training events, connect with educational institutions on special research projects, and implement model practices from other jurisdictions.	<p>Support from the Department of Commerce to support community and economic resilience for the WA Coast.</p> <p>This recommendation can support other multiple recommendations related to coastal hazards and economic resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislature • Governor • Commerce
Economic	Coastal Rural Broadband	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor increase broadband access and infrastructure for WA coastal communities by leveraging current regulations and federal support.	Increase internet broadband access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislature • Governor

Economic	Energy supply and infrastructure assessment	WCMAC recommends that the WA Legislature and the Governor fund an assessment that 1) identifies vulnerabilities for coastal communities related to their electrical power supply, particularly where there are single points of failure, and work with those communities to suggest potential solutions for restoring power quickly after a critical event (e.g., storms, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis) and 2) identifies potential economic barriers in installing energy infrastructure for businesses and industries.	Identification of coastal power vulnerabilities and solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Energy Office
Economic	Burrowing shrimp	WCMAC recommends that the Governor implement an emergency program to allow shellfish growers on the SW Coast to use chemical and/or mechanical control of burrowing shrimp until a pest management tool is in place that meets common agricultural parameters around damage density.	Emergency program to allow shellfish growers on the SW Coast to control burrowing shrimp and their associated impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor

Recent Recommendation to the Governor:

WCMAC sent this recommendation to the Governor on December 16, 2020. This recommendation remains a high priority for coastal economic resilience.

Economic	Green Crab	We ask that you and our state legislators use your authority to support the convening of a policy forum to provide policy-level advice on the management and eradication of the highly invasive European green crab in Washington.
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Attachment B: Timeline of Associated Events

- 2015 After a severe winter in 2015, coastal entities in Grays Harbor County, in partnership with the office of U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer’s Office and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), convened a coast-wide event focused on strengthening regional partnerships to overcome the chronic crisis of disasters caused by natural hazards.
- 2016 An alliance of local, tribal, state and federal partners formed the [Grays Harbor Resilience Coalition \(GHRC\)](#) to address both immediate and future natural hazards through collaborative research, planning, and investment in capital projects. The effort was spearheaded by Ocean Shores Mayor Crystal Dingler, with ongoing support from Ecology and U.S. Rep. Derek Kilmer. With the additional support of State Rep. Steve Tharinger, the Washington Legislature included \$200,000 in the state’s 2016-17 supplemental capital budget to support the GHRC effort. Ecology received an additional \$25,000 from FEMA to support the GHRC.
- 2017 At the beginning stages of the GHRC, staff from U.S. Rep. Kilmer’s office and Ecology contacted the William D. Ruckelshaus Center seeking independent facilitation services to meet the group’s objectives. Through a series of conversations, the Center suggested that while the GHRC may decide to continue pursuing a short-term budget request specific to Grays Harbor County, there also appears to interest in and an opportunity for multiple coastal communities to work together on a more durable coast-wide approach to hazards resilience. With support from the GHRC, Ecology and U.S. Rep. Kilmer’s office contracted with the Ruckelshaus Center to complete the “Washington State Coast Resilience Assessment.”
- 2017 The Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council (WCMAC) invited guest speakers to member meetings to better understand the issues and existing community efforts, and began discussions to determine how to best support the growing hazards resilience initiative on the coast.
- 2017 WCMAC created a coastal resilience technical work group and asked that they prepare a working definition that aligns with the Council’s role and identify priorities to help members determine how to advance resilience goals and objectives. During the December meeting, members discussed the following items:
1. An inclusive working definition of resilience that recognizes economic well-being as critical aspect of community resilience.
 2. A prioritized list of Ruckelshaus recommendations that WCMAC could assist with implementing.
 3. A prioritized list of Ruckelshaus recommendations that WCMAC should advocate for/recommend financing or otherwise support.
- 2018 In a letter dated March 28, 2018, Governor Inslee expressed his full support for WCMAC’s desire to build on the work recently completed by the Ruckelshaus Center’s [“Washington State](#)

[Coast Resilience Assessment,](#)” and requested that WCMAC help to “identify high priority needs and actions to carry out the recommendations from the assessment regarding coastal hazards.”

- 2019 After a year of discussion and investigation, the WCMAC decided that a priority should be placed on implementing the recommendation to “Establish a Coast-Wide Resilience Initiative to Enhance and Integrate Efforts.” To best address this need, the Center’s report highlighted that there needs to be a core group of entities who would partner together as integrators, provide backbone services, and work as a team to address resilience issues coast-wide. The Center recommended the formation of a “Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team” (COHORT). The COHORT effort builds on the experiences and lessons learned from past efforts, most notably the Governor-convened Southwest Coast Erosion Task Force (1999) and the Flood Hazard Reduction Projects and Agency Coordination (funded by SB 3110 in 1998). Experience gained from these previous efforts should make this effort more durable and effective. The support from and collaboration among multiple agencies; the State support for a community-led initiative; and the fact that this effort is envisioned from the outset as a long-term initiative sets it apart.
- 2019 WCMAC launched a partnership with Ecology and Washington Sea Grant that acquired grant funding from NOAA to pilot the Ruckelshaus Center’s recommendation of establishing a Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team (COHORT) to enhance and integrate coast-wide resilience efforts. The 18-month (2020-2021) [Resilience Action Demonstration Project \(RAD\)](#) pilot program was a proof of concept which tested the logistics of the interagency COHORT model and identified strategies for improving and better coordinating agencies’ hazards assistance to Washington’s coastal communities by accomplishing the following:
- a. WCMAC and Ecology funded a follow-up study conducted by the Ruckelshaus Center to fully detail [“Options and Considerations for Implementing the Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team \(COHORT\)”](#)
 - b. Local and regional outreach was conducted with coastal MRCs, tribes, local jurisdictions, state and county emergency managers, special districts, state and federal agency officials, and local project proponents, resulting in an inventory of hazards priorities, hurdles, and opportunities across the Pacific coast of Washington.
 - c. The pilot identified over 175 “on the shelf” projects that are ready for deployment as funding and opportunity arises.
 - d. The pilot developed a framework of resilience project principles and an assessment of hazards resilience programs to inform the scoping and development of locally-led resilience projects.
 - e. The pilot assisted three locally-led projects to scope and submit funding requests, resulting in combined \$845,000 in expected funding for hazards resilience planning and community development on the coast.
 - f. Developed findings that helped inform WCMAC in refining final recommendations to key state entities, the Governor, State Legislature, and members of the Washington Congressional Delegation.

- 2020 WCMAC acknowledged the importance of the Ruckelshaus finding that the “well-being of communities and the coastal natural environment are intimately linked; therefore, it is important to consider the intersection of economic prosperity, community health, ecology, infrastructure, and governance when considering how to improve coastal resilience.” WCMAC decided to pursue economic resilience as an additional priority. A WCMAC economic resilience workgroup was formed to begin preparing for an in-person workshop to build awareness, share knowledge and experiences, and discuss next steps for improving economic resilience on the coast. However, WCMAC had to pivot from their in-person workshop to an online webinar series due to the COVID-19 pandemic. WCMAC hosted a series of four webinars that invited key experts, presenters, stakeholders, and tribes to explore the tourism industry, forestry industry, marine/coastal industries, and economic resilience ([recorded and posted on the WCMAC website](#)). After these workshops, the WCMAC economic resilience workgroup sent out a survey to workshop participants to solicit ideas for economic resilience recommendations.
- 2021 WCMAC staff and facilitators combined hazards and economic resilience recommendations into a final draft. WCMAC convened a series of three coastal resilience technical workgroup workshops to synthesize findings, refine recommendations, and prepare a draft decision package for full member consideration on June 16, 2021.
- 2021 WCMAC reviewed and discussed the proposed recommendations and provided an opportunity for public comments. WCMAC came to a consensus on a final set of resilience recommendations (attachment A).