

Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council

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

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, 98504-0002

7 March 2025

SUBJECT: Letter of Introduction to the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council

Dear Governor Ferguson,

On behalf of the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council (WCMAC), I want to congratulate you on becoming the 24th Governor of our great state and extend a thank you. The 'thank you' is for your life of public service, dedication, and commitment to our state. The WCMAC looks forward to working with you and your office in the years to come. This letter is an introduction to the WCMAC and expresses our commitment to you, the legislature, and our state – to serve all with the best of our abilities and the focused interests of Washington's coastal communities. The WCMAC represents a vast range of ocean and coastal interests. There are 26 positions comprising members who represent citizens, commercial fishing, conservation, economic development, education, energy industries, recreation, recreational fishing, shellfish aquaculture, shipping, science, ports, salmon partnerships, and state agencies. An appointed member of the Governor's policy staff has actively participated in our meetings, as well as in the operations of the WCMAC.

Our membership is made up of many dedicated individuals who, like you, have made a commitment to the Evergreen State with a specific focus on our state's remarkable ocean and coastal assets. To that end, the WCMAC provides advice and recommendations on vital issues that affect our unique communities, including resource policy, planning, and management. It also serves as a forum for government and member entities to discuss these issues.

Since its formation in 2013¹, the WCMAC has made significant contributions to coastal planning efforts. The WCMAC worked closely with the state agencies responsible for the State's [Marine Spatial Plan](#) (MSP), providing critical advice and policy recommendations – some of which became the bases for administrative regulations. After the MSP was adopted in 2018, it was approved by NOAA and incorporated into the Washington Coastal Zone Management Program along with two enforceable policies: Fisheries Use Protection Standards and Important, Sensitive, and Unique Area Protection Standards ([see MSP Table 10](#)). These new policies added to existing enforceable policies, including the Ocean Resources Management Act (RCW 43.143), which the state uses to assess the impacts of federal actions on state resources under the Coastal Zone Management Act. The MSP remains a critical management tool associated with our ocean and coast and, as a living document, it can be revised and adapted to issues that may arise during your governorship.

¹ Enacted under the Ocean Resources Management Act (RCW 43.143) in 2013, RCW 43.143.050 officially recognized WCMAC as the Governor's advisory body on coastal water resource management issues on Washington's Pacific Coast.

In the years since, the WCMAC has continued to serve as a forum, developing recommendations, providing advice, and highlighting a variety of ocean and coast-related interests. Based upon our statutory charge the WCMAC's priorities include the following:

- Advise the Governor, the Legislature, and state and local agencies on ocean and coastal waters resource management issues on Washington's Pacific Coast, including policy, planning, and management.
- Consider the principles and policies articulated in Washington's Ocean Action Plan and the protection and preservation of existing sustainable uses for current and future generations, including economic stakeholders reliant on marine waters to stabilize the vitality of the coastal economy.
- Be a leader in building a resilient Washington coast by:
 - Contributing to long-term planning efforts to face pressing ocean and coastal challenges.
 - Supporting coordination with tribes, neighboring jurisdictions, and potential project partners.
- Create lasting partnerships with state agencies that help coastal communities address current challenges while working toward a prosperous future.

Recently, the WCMAC focused on two key areas for discussion and developing guidance and recommendations: coastal resilience and offshore wind (OSW).

A concern shared amongst our membership is building coastal resilience – addressing the environmental and economic components unique to coastal, rural communities. Many coastal counties and communities often lack the capacity to proactively plan for future conditions, relying instead on incident-specific planning that often lacks coordination with neighboring jurisdictions, tribes, and other affected parties. To address this, state funding and support is critical for staffing, planning, project development, and establishing sustainable programs.

As you and your administration are working to address a significant long-term budgetary shortfall, we would ask that a colloquial saying in rural communities be kept in mind. That saying is *"when urban Washington, or Olympia, gets a cold, rural Washington gets pneumonia."* Budget cuts disproportionately affect rural and coastal communities and continued state investment in essential personnel and planning initiatives, particularly those supported by the WCMAC's 26-member body, have and will be vital to helping coastal communities build resilience to economic and environmental hazards.

The WCMAC also focused on OSW, which offers potential as a clean, renewable energy source for Washington; however, this must not come at the expense of the state's maritime traditions, culture, heritage, and ocean environment. The WCMAC emphasized the need for detailed ecological, economic, and social understanding of the Pacific Coast, building on what is established in the Marine Spatial Plan regarding research needs essential to evaluating the impact of new proposals and uses on existing renewable marine resources and uses. As the WCMAC has stated in previous recommendations to the Governor, further research is needed to understand OSW's cumulative impacts on ocean processes, site-specific effects on micro-ecosystems, and near-shore/onshore transmission systems. Additionally, clear assessments are needed of OSW's short- and long-term costs, including its impact on residents.

While some may view the WCMAC's concerns as overly protective, the position of the WCMAC reflects its members' understanding and knowledge of the extremely fragile nature of not only the ecology of the coast and ocean, but also the local economies.

In both of these priority areas, the WCMAC's membership remains committed to achieving tangible results. To focus efforts, Resilience and OSW Technical Committees were established and accomplishments include:

- Organizing a federal and state **Coastal Resiliency Briefing** for the Washington Congressional Delegation, legislative staff, and federal agency staff
- Supporting the **Washington State Coastal Climate Resilience Initiative**, which secured \$73.6 million in funding.
- Hosting discussions with the **Coastal Hazards Organizational Resilience Team** (COHORT) and preparing for a meaningful partnership with their efforts.
- Recommending **Principles of Engagement** for Offshore Wind.
- Contributing to **the Gridworks report** ("*A Proposed Offshore Wind Engagement Framework for Washington State*") through discussion and interview hours.
- Submitting a [letter to the governor with key recommendations](#) on the Gridworks report's findings, following a special WCMAC meeting.

The WCMAC brings together a diverse range of ocean and coastal interests that would be challenging to convene elsewhere. Our strong commitment to consensus-based decisions is evident in our thoughtful and unified recommendation letters.

Linked below are copies of earlier documents the WCMAC provided on issues of coastal resilience and OSW. These are offered as examples of the work the WCMAC has undertaken, and for the insight into the operations of the council.

- [WCMAC Resilience Recommendations to the Governor 07.29.2021](#)
- [WCMAC Offshore Wind Recommended Principles of Engagement to the Governor 01.10.2023](#)
- [WCMAC Gridworks Report Recommendations to the Governor 8.1.2024](#)
 - [Governor Inslee Offshore Wind Letter to WCMAC 9.23.2024](#) (*letter back to WCMAC*)
- [2022 WCMAC Accomplishments](#)
- [2023 WCMAC Accomplishments](#)

In closing, I would like to reiterate the WCMAC's congratulations and thanks to you. We all stand ready to work with you and your team to continue the efforts to address ecological challenges and economic opportunities vital to the resiliency of our state's precious ocean resources and coastal communities. Thank you for your time and know that the WCMAC looks forward to your directives and requests.

Sincerely,



Rod Fleck
Chair



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COASTAL
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COUNCIL

CC:

- Owen Rowe, Office of the Governor
- Kenneth Martin, Office of the Governor
- Carrie Sessions, Department of Ecology
- Casey Dennehy, Department of Ecology
- Governor Board and Commission Office
- Members, Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council