

Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council Meeting

Draft Summary

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Part 1 from 10:00am – 12:45pm

Part 2 from 2:00pm – 3:30pm

This meeting summary provides key action items and discussion highlights from the WCMAC meeting. For more, see below:

- **Meeting materials and presentations can be found on the WCMAC website:**
<https://www.ezview.wa.gov/?alias=1962&pageid=37058>
- **Meeting recordings – which contain full transcripts – can be viewed here:** [Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council - TVW](#)

Highlights

- State agencies provided budget updates
- The nature-based revetment project in Westport was highlighted, with in-person participants visiting the site to see its significance for coastal resilience
- A presentation on *Economic Resilience Updates & Coastal Opportunities for Resilience and Livelihoods* was provided, providing helpful context going into the WCMAC discussion on coastal resilience
- WCMAC members had a discussion to begin defining economic resilience in the context of coastal communities and narrowing in on particular focus areas

Upcoming Meetings

- Next WCMAC Meeting: October 1, 2025

WCMAC Members Present	
Anderson, Phil - Recreational Fishing	Fleck, Rod – North Pacific MRC
Arkema, Katie – Science Organization	Litle, Kate – WA Sea Grant
Beugli, David – Shellfish Aquaculture	Niles, Corey – DFW
Blake, Brian – Commercial Fishing	Niles, Matt – State Parks
Bold, Molly – Coastal Port	Rechner, Michael – DNR
Conrad, Michele – Coastal Economic Development Group	Steelquist, Peter – Coastal Recreation
Culbertson, Paula – Wahkiakum MRC	Talebi, Bobbak - Ecology
Dalan, Garrett – Grays Harbor MRC	Thevik, Larry – Commercial Fishing
Dolsak, Nives – Educational institution	

Council Members Absent	
Fleck, Rod – North Pacific MRC	Nordin, Michael – Pacific MRC
Meinig, Christian – Coastal Energy	

Others Present (as noted on the in-person sign-in sheet and Zoom log-in)	
Albert, Donna - Retired	Gutierrez, Nicole – Facilitator
Aoki, Mai - ECY	Hole, Rick - GHC Commissioner
B, Scott – Self	Kaminsky, George - ECY
Barnes, Leonard – Port of Grays Harbor	Krienitz, Jay – Ecology Coast and Oceans Unit Manager
Bell, Henry – ECY	Nightingale, David – Self
Blalock, Jackson – Pacific Conservation District	Poirson, Brittany – DNR
Brown-Law, Alle – Facilitator	Skelton, Ann – Pacific County MRC
Quigg, Tom – City of Westport	Smith, Hailey – WA Sea Grant
Chang, Michael – Cascadia Consulting Group	Sritrairat, Sanpisa - WA Sea Grant
Dennehy, Casey – ECY, WCMAC Staff	Tantisook, Jess – WA Sea Grant/IEOC
Esmond, Kirk – Commerce	Welter, Ed – City of Westport
First, Lee – Twin Harbors Waterkeeper	Witkop, Bobby – Surfer
Gaffney, Michael – WSU	Wright, Teri – Forest/Salmon/Orca Advocate
Giannakos, Sam – ECY	Zimmerman, Olivia – ECY

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting recording 00:00 – 0:24:50

- Peter Steelquist, WCMAC Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at McCausland Hall in Westport, WA.
- John Shaw, Molly Bold, Commissioner Tom Quigg, and Mayor Ed Welter welcomed WCMAC to Westport. John read a Tribal Land acknowledgement.
- The meeting agenda, ground rules, and expectations for WCMAC members and public observers were reviewed.
- The March Meeting WCMAC Meeting Summary and reviewed the edits were provided.
 - An action item was identified for the Steering Committee to consider, regarding the use meeting summary recording timestamps moving forward.
 - Brian Blake moved to approve the March Meeting WCMAC Meeting Summary. Molly Bold seconded the motion. Meeting minutes were adopted.

WCMAC Updates

Announcements

- Casey Dennehy, Ecology, shared that the facilitation contract is coming to an end, and the facilitation contract will go through a competitive bid process for the renewed contract.

Updates

Meeting recording 0:26:41 – 1:35:09

MRC Updates

- **Wahkiakum MRC:** Paula Culbertson shared that the committee is currently reviewing grant applications through applicant presentations. Due to a \$7,000 budget cut, approximately \$30,000 is available for distribution this year. Three applicants presented at the last meeting, and four more are scheduled to present in June.
- **Grays Harbor MRC:** John Shaw, speaking on behalf of Garrett Dalan, shared that the committee is working with City of Ocean Shores and Westport at the recommendation of the MRC to pursue coastal erosion and related priorities through the County's FEMA application. Given shifts in the federal administration, the County is reassessing its strategy. There is strong momentum and positive collaboration among the cities and the County to approach Grays Harbor's challenges in a cohesive, collaborative way.
- **North Pacific MRC:** *Representative not in attendance.*
- **Pacific MRC:** *Representative not in attendance.*

Agency Updates

Agencies were requested to provide budget updates in addition to any other timely updates.

- **WA Department of Ecology:** Bobbak Talebi, shared SHB 1309 was passed and signed by the Governor, which included a new statute on integrated pest management framework developed under the settlement agreement with shellfish growers to address burrowing shrimp. Funding for this work was reduced this biennium due to budget cuts. The Coastal Hazards Resilience team also saw a \$2M reduction, leaving \$1.9M. Offshore wind provisos were not funded. Ecology is working with partners to maintain progress despite limited funding. Uncertainty remains around federal funding for the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program. Ecology is coordinating with Congress and the Governor's Office to support continued nationwide funding.
 - Bobbak shared a link to the CZM Program Letter of Support: <https://coastalstates.org/sign-on-to-urge-congress-to-fund-coastal-management-programs/>
- **WA Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Corey Niles, shared that WDFW's ongoing funding was cut by \$14.8 million, impacting programs across wildlife, habitat, fish, and enforcement. This will likely reduce enforcement capacity and staff, though details are still emerging. One-time funding requests were not approved, and some activities received only partial funding. To offset cuts, WDFW is raising fees for hunting and fishing licenses, Discover Passes, Columbia River salmon and steelhead endorsement, personalized license plates. MRC funding was reduced, previously there was about \$70,000 per MRC per biennium and it is anticipated that \$33,000 less will be passed to counties to support the MRCs.
- **WA Department of Natural Resources:** Mike Rechner shared that wildfire preparedness funding was cut by 50% and supplemental funds will likely be needed in 2026. Core aquatic programs were maintained, though some grant-funded science efforts were impacted. DNR received \$2.5M for green crab management, and funding for derelict structure and vessel removal was sustained.

- **WA State Parks:** Matt Niles shared that Parks is facing a \$6.5M budget cut, with the biggest impact expected to be reduced seasonal park staff. Discover Pass fee increases are planned for fall 2025.
- **WA Sea Grant:** *Please note that WA Sea Grant is not a state agency.* Kate Litle shared a reminder that WA Sea Grant is primarily federally funded through NOAA (~70% of its \$10M budget), with additional support from UW and state agencies. Currently, there is a \$4M delay in federal funding due to prolonged approval processes, with funds expected but not yet received since February 2025. The FY2026 President's Budget does not include funding for Sea Grant, creating significant uncertainty moving forward. Despite this, Sea Grant has diversified funding sources and reserve funds, allowing programs to continue for now. If federal funds don't come through, program reductions may be necessary. State agency partnerships, including recent funding increases from Ecology and continued support from WDFW for green crab management, have helped sustain key efforts. Sea Grant remains committed to maintaining operations amid ongoing uncertainty.

General Coastal Updates

- Phil Anderson shared that the Pacific Salmon Commission, funded through federal grants (~\$40 million/year, majority via the Dept. of Commerce), supports salmon hatcheries and habitat work. Ongoing federal funding delays are forcing decisions on priorities that could impact the work the Commission manages, with uncertainty posing a major challenge for agencies like WDFW, which relies on these funds.
- Larry Thevik provided an update on the coastal crab fishery, noting that within the last four seasons we have had both highest single season's catch values and highest catch volume ever recorded at 28 million pounds for a single season. While this season's catch volume (estimated at 15-17 million pounds) is down from that highest catch volume, the ex vessel landing value is expected to exceed \$100 million. This value reflects "first dollars" and does not include added value from the catch as crab moves through processing, transport and the marketplace, adding significant economic benefit for fishers, coastal communities and the state's economy.
- Peter Steelquist invited participation in Surfrider's annual July 5th beach cleanup along the coast.
- Molly Bold noted the Westport Marina's high demand across recreational, charter, and commercial sectors, with a waitlist for moorage and the Port of Grays Harbor breaking ground on its largest-ever project, supporting broader infrastructure needs.
- David Beugli spoke positively about progress on Substitute House Bill 1309 (more information can be found at <https://www.ipmwg.org/>) and dredging needs in Willapa Bay, though recent RFP bids came in well over budget, complicating urgently needed access improvements for the shellfish industry.

Offshore Wind (OSW) Updates

- Larry Thevik provided an update regarding OSW at the state and regional scale. The Governor vetoed the offshore wind provisos, providing a justification that related in part to uncertainty over processes and funding for many other projects. Included in the statement, the Governor noted that, "Given the current federal administration's position on offshore

wind, this work is less time sensitive.” He also cited the state’s significant fiscal challenges and funding cuts from the federal government as reasons for the veto. However, the Governor did note that they are “committed to continued dialogue with coastal Tribes regarding the future of offshore wind projects on the Washington coast.” This sentence is important, as the provisos included language about protecting treaty-protected tribal resources. That could be seen as a favorable position, possibly extending beyond tribal protections to the state’s co-managed fisheries. There seems to be a glimmer of hope in the Governor’s statement, potentially encompassing all tribal-protected resources and Washington’s share as well.

- Updates on Oregon and California were also provided, highlights include:
 - In Oregon, House Bill 4080 initiated an Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap with “exit ramps,” expected by September 2025. Offshore wind is now considered less imminent than initially expected.
 - In California, site assessments continue, but no COPs are expected before 2029. While \$400M was pledged for Humboldt Bay infrastructure, funding and project timelines remain uncertain.

MRAC Update

- *No updates at this time*

Coastal Resilience

[Meeting recording](#) 1:07:52 – 1:31:24

- Mike Chang (Cascadia Consulting Group) and John Shaw (Executive Director Westport South Beach Historical Society) presented on WCMAC’s progress in advancing coastal and economic resilience, including finalized recommendations and ongoing partnerships like COHORT. John highlighted Westport’s successful nature-based dynamic revetment project that is built through community effort and strong collaboration with Ecology, which has proven effective, resilient, and a potential model for other coastal areas. Please refer to the recording and slides ([Attachment A](#)) for the full presentations and additional information.

Field Trip

In-person attendees joined a field trip where Molly Bold, John Shaw, and City Council member Troy Meyers gave an informative overview of the Westport Marina and the nature-based revetment project. The group discussed the marina’s vital role as an economic driver, highlighted by its ranking among the top 10 busiest ports in the U.S., and explored details of the revetment work, including partnerships with state agencies and local government.

Economic Resilience

[Meeting recording](#) 1:32:22 – 1:55:31

- Jess Tantisook, Economic Recovery Corps Fellow hosted by Washington Sea Grant, presented on the Area Sector Analysis Process (ASAP) and the CORaL Project. She

highlighted key findings from the ASAP study across Washington’s five coastal counties—such as the need for trades training, expansion of maritime manufacturing, and support for existing businesses—and outlined how the CORaL Project is building regional economic resilience through workforce development, stakeholder coordination, and planning for a Blue Economy Visioning process. Please refer to the recording and slides ([Attachment A](#)) for the full presentations and additional information.

Discussion

- A participant asked about the list of funding sources shared in the presentation and if they remained available. Jess shared that many sources remain available, and agencies were responsive in confirming current opportunities.
- Larry Thevik emphasized the need to support existing businesses, particularly the fishing industry, given its economic importance to coastal communities like Westport and Pacific County. Jess noted that while no projects were fishing-specific, related efforts (e.g., support for small businesses and entrepreneurship) do include resources applicable to fishing vessels, which operate as small businesses.

Public Comment

[Meeting recording](#) 1:55:33 – 2:07:55

- Donna Albert: Donna raised concerns about accelerating ocean heating, acidification, and biodiversity loss, stressing their threat to the fishing industry. She criticized the Westport Golf Course project for filling 35 acres of rare wetland, essential for flood control and biodiversity. Donna also opposed proposed woody biomass plants, stating that producing and exporting wood pellets results in high carbon emissions, greater than coal, and contributes to forest degradation and increased flooding.
- Teri Wright: Teri highlighted two proposed woody biomass plants in Longview and Hoquiam, warning they could triple logging in the Chehalis Basin. She linked this to increased flooding and threats to Chinook salmon—critical prey for endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales. With one-third of whales already in poor condition, she urged WCMAC to explore the issue further and offered to connect them with experts for a future presentation.
- Lee First (Twin Harbors Waterkeeper): Lee echoed concerns about the wood pellet industry, saying the proposed plants would pull biomass from up to 75 miles away, risking forest health and watershed stability. She criticized minimal forest residue requirements and lack of enforcement, arguing that increased logging would worsen flooding and harm water quality. She encouraged WCMAC to stay informed as these projects develop.
- Katherine Marcell (Westport Aquarium): Katherine opposed the revetment and golf course projects, citing high condo owner costs and severe wetland damage. She emphasized wetlands’ natural role in stormwater absorption and wave reduction—retaining up to 1.5 million gallons of water per acre and cutting storm surge by 50%. She urged WCMAC to value nature-based protections over engineered solutions.

WCMAC Resilience Discussion

[Meeting recording](#) 2:08:39 – 2:57:00

Nicole Gutierrez, facilitator, introduced the goal and framing of the discussion. The WCMAC will explore and define economic resilience in the context of coastal communities, and begin developing a process for identifying specific objectives and recommendations WCMAC can advance. It was clarified that the Governor's office has not yet shared direction on this topic but it is timely for the WCMAC to lay the groundwork for making recommendations in the future by establishing a thoughtful process now.

The following is a summary of key themes and WCMAC member contributions. Please refer to the recording for the full discussion.

- There was a process suggestion for **the WCMAC to develop both a working definition and a narrow problem statement to guide progress in exploring this topic.** It was emphasized that effective recommendations require time, deliberation, and clarity on scope.
- **Membership emphasized building on existing strengths and current industries/assets:**
 - We should not overlook existing assets in Ilwaco and Westport (e.g., fishing industry, infrastructure, processing, hospitality, marine manufacturing). There was a suggestion to focus on investing in what already exists, rather than focusing only on creating new industries.
 - There was a reminder of the WCMAC's foundational mandate – i.e, to protect and preserve existing sustainable uses for current and future generations. A broad-scope approach on how we interpret economic resilience was encouraged, avoiding prioritizing one sector over others.
 - The WCMAC's previous recommendations were largely successful. There was a suggestion to reflect on those more closely to assess progress and gaps.
- **The WCMAC had varying perspectives when it came to defining economic resilience:**
 - Some defined economic resilience as having dependable, family-wage jobs supported by foundational industries in coastal communities.
 - Members highlighted the interdependence between ecological health and economic resilience, especially in relation to concerns over offshore wind development and other federal energy initiatives. Taking a science-based approach and finding solutions that protect both ecosystems and communities were emphasized.
 - The importance of local energy resilience as it relates to the economy was raised, with suggestions to explore community-driven energy solutions that enhance both environmental and economic resilience.
 - It was noted that economic resilience should not simply mean the ability to "bounce back" after hardship. Instead, the WCMAC has an opportunity to help avoid harm in the first place through proactive and preventative recommendations.
- **There is more conversation to be unpacked related to permitting reform and understanding economic drivers:**

- From a Port and county perspective, *permitting reform* is a top barrier. WCMAC to consider how to streamline permitting for docks, revetments, and other infrastructure project.
 - It was noted that permitting streamlining has been suggested in state budget discussions.
- There was a suggestion to review an economic impact study that Michele Conrad is working on to support this discussion.
- The ASAP community survey, which gathered input from 586 community members, was identified as a helpful data point for the WCMAC's work.
- It was raised that there is a need to develop a sustainable economy post-logging, highlighting that community efforts like Common Ground and interest in habitat restoration are beneficial. WCMAC could support actionable ideas to spark hope and create viable futures for inland coastal communities.
- It was noted that recent state investment in Hoh Road infrastructure as a signal that outdoor recreation and rec fishing are being recognized as key components of economic resilience.
- Members shared that there is a real value to the WCMAC continuing these discussions, as membership represents diverse coastal perspectives which is critical when exploring complex dynamics (e.g., offshore wind, tourism, fishing).
- **Next Steps:**

For the next WCMAC meeting, the facilitators and the WCMAC Steering Committee will build from this discussion to share the October WCMAC agenda. The discussion may consider:

 - Developing a working definition of "Economic Resilience" for the WCMAC's context.
 - Crafting a problem statement to guide future work and recommendations.
 - Reviewing past WCMAC Recommendations to identify progress, gaps, and opportunities for next steps.
 - Assessing permitting challenges and scope of potential reform recommendations.
 - Coordinating with ongoing economic impact studies (e.g., Port of Grays Harbor, touching base with Michele Conrad).
 - Reviewing and leverage existing data (e.g., ASAP report).

Closing and Adjourn

- Peter closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. Special thanks was given to John Shaw and Molly Bold for their critical coordination and support.
 - Next WCMAC meeting: October 1st, 2025. This meeting will be hybrid. More information on meeting location to come via email.

Attachment A: Meeting Presentations

See next page for meeting presentations.

1. WCMAC Presentation
2. WCMAC Coastal Hazards and Economic Resilience Recommendations
3. Economic Resilience Updates and Coastal Opportunities for Resilience and Livelihoods

DRAFT