

Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council Meeting

Draft Summary

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Part 1 from 10:00am – 12:00pm

Part 2 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm

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](#)

High-Level Summary (more information for each item provided below)

- **Minutes** - June 2025 WCMAC Meeting minutes were adopted by consensus.
- **WCMAC Updates** - Governor's Office update: current WCMAC members will continue to serve past October 7 while appointments are refreshed; members will be asked to reapply and help fill vacancies by recommending anyone that would be a good fit for an open seat.
- **MRC Updates** - included Port of Grays Harbor Terminal 4 upgrade and a strong 2025 fishing season; MRAC meets November 4.
- **Agency Updates** - included DNR discussion on proposed Sea-Link trans-Pacific cable landings near Westport; members requested inviting project proponents and Oregon Cable Commission to provide additional info at December meeting.
- **General Coastal Updates** –
 - Surfrider Foundation: Legislative efforts on plastic waste continue, but Washington's budget deficit may hinder progress. Offshore drilling plans are pending; economic feasibility for Washington remains low, prompting calls for proactive protection.
 - Crab Fishery: The season ended successfully with 16 million pounds landed and over \$110 million in value, meeting projections.
 - Habitat Restoration: Projects in Naselle and North Cove are improving salmon habitat and coastal resilience, with signs of Razor Clam recovery.
 - Washington Sea Grant: Nearly \$4 million in FY25 funding secured; five new Coastal Resilience Fellows selected. Upcoming workshops and meetings scheduled in South Bend.
 - Port of Grays Harbor: Marina and terminal expansions underway; soybean mill boosts local wages by \$60 million. 2024 fishing season was exceptionally strong.
 - Funding Opportunity: The Washington Coast Restoration and Resilience Initiative offers grants for shovel-ready MRC habitat and education projects.
- **MRC Funding** - MRC funding has declined since its creation in 2008, and support from the Pacific Conservation District is waning, impacting outcomes. Mike Nordin urged WCMAC to advocate for increased funding and consider assigning grant-writing duties to support MRCs. The goal this year is to raise legislative awareness, not request immediate funding.
- **Economic Resilience** - WCMAC will draft an Economic Resilience one-page document to move forward forming a Technical Committee for further discussion on Economic Resilience; several members volunteered to work with Rod Fleck to draft a one-page document required to form the committee.
- **Fireworks & Marine Debris** – Guests presented data regarding beach clean-up efforts, which led to a discussion on continued post-July 4 debris and local cost burdens; potential options and near-term actions were identified.
- **Public Comments** - Teri Wright raised concerns that the Hoquiam Pellet Plant could harm Chinook salmon habitat due to increased logging, with limited job benefits. Molly Bold countered that the job impact is significant and proposed inviting a project

representative to address misinformation at the December 3 meeting. Lee First noted a pollution report is due soon and suggested reviewing it at the next WCMAC meeting.

- **Closing and Adjournment** - Everyone is asked to review their calendars for 2026 and identify any scheduling conflicts, such as the WDFW North of Falcon meeting. Dave will send out a Doodle poll or survey to finalize dates, which must be published by January. The next WCMAC meeting is December 3, with potential agenda items including ocean cables, federal drilling, fireworks, economic resilience, and the Hoquiam Pellet Plant.

Attendance

WCMAC Members Present	
Brian Blake – Commercial Fishing	Matt Niles – State Parks (via Zoom)
Chris Meinig – Coastal Energy (via Zoom)	Michael Nordin – Pacific MRC (via Zoom)
Corey Niles – WDFW (via Zoom)	Michael Rechner – DNR (via Zoom)
David Beugli – Shellfish Aquaculture (via Zoom)	Michele Conrad – Coastal Economic Development Group (via Zoom)
Katie Arkema – Science Organization (via Zoom)	Molly Bold – Coastal Port (via Zoom)
Kate Litle – WA Sea Grant (via Zoom)	Peter Steelquist – Coastal Recreation (via Zoom)
Larry Thevik – Commercial Fishing (via Zoom)	Rod Fleck – North Pacific MRC

Council Members Absent	
Bobbak Talebi - Ecology	Paula Culbertson – Wahkiakum MRC
Garrett Dalan – Grays Harbor MRC	Phil Anderson - Recreational Fishing
Nives Dolsak – Educational institution	Stephanie Bowman – Dept of Commerce

Others Present (as noted on the in-person sign-in sheet and Zoom log-in)	
Ann Skelton – Pacific County MRC (via Zoom)	Kiresemr103 (as entered in Zoom)
Bruce Rittenhouse, Grays Harbor Surfrider (via Zoom)	Jay Krienitz – Dept of Ecology (via Zoom)
Casey Dennehy – ECY, WCMAC Staff	Jenna Rolf – Makah Tribe (via Zoom)
Chris Waldbillig – WDFW (via Zoom)	Lee First – Twin Harbors Waterkeeper (via Zoom)
Courtney Skalley – The Nature Conservancy (via Zoom)	Kevin Decker – WA SeaGrant (via Zoom)

David Frederick – Facilitator	Kirk Esmond – WA Dept of Commerce (via Zoom)
David Nightingale – Self	Kristine Nevitt (via Zoom)
Eleanor Hines - Twin Harbors Waterkeeper (via Zoom)	Natalie Lowell – Makah Tribe (via Zoom)
Greg Zora – former Aquatic Land Manager (via Zoom)	Nick Tealer – NWIFC (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission)
Iphone76 (as entered in Zoom)	Nika (as entered in Zoom)
Katherine Boyd - Facilitator	Nives (as entered in Zoom)
Keven A Decker – Washington SeaGrant (via Zoom)	Rick Hole – Gray’s Harbor County Commissioner
	Teri Wright – Forest/Salmon/Orca Advocate (via Zoom)

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting recording

10:00 a.m. – Meeting called to order

- Chair Rod Fleck opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda and process, and initiated roll call. June meeting summary slated for action later in the agenda.
- Dave Frederick from Halcyon Northwest welcomed participants to the October 1, 2025 session of the Washington Coastal Marine Advisory Council (WCMAC).
- He provided brief remarks about the meeting’s purpose and introduced **Katherine from Halcyon Northwest**. Dave and Katherine are the new facilitation team now under contract with the Department of Ecology. Katherine introduced herself and outlined meeting logistics, including participation guidelines, recording notice, and the day’s agenda format.

WCMAC Updates

Announcements

- **Governor’s Office:**
Casey Dennehy passed along that WCMAC Members will continue serving after October 7 while new appointments are reviewed. All members will be asked to reapply and assist in identifying candidates for upcoming vacancies.

- The minutes from the WCMAC June 2025 meeting, which included Larry Thevik's edits, were adopted by WCMAC members.

Updates

[Meeting recording](#)

MRC Updates

- **Grays Harbor MRC:** Garret was not present, but Molly Bold reported that the MRC continues to meet and fund community projects. No major updates.
- **North Pacific Coast MRC:**
 - Navigating the new state budget rollout in September.
 - Discussion topics include European green crab, marine debris, climate-fuel issues, and budget planning.
 - Upcoming Maritime Heritage Event scheduled for October 18 (10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.) at the Marine Resource Center in Forks. Olympic Coast Natural Marine Sanctuary and tribal partners are sponsoring the event.
 - There was also mention of potential impacts from a federal government shutdown.
- **Pacific County MRC:** Mike Nordin shared that funds have not yet been allocated nor have projects been selected. However, the following subcommittees have been formed:
 - A subcommittee focused on science and information, also looking at developing procedures and project scoring.
 - A subcommittee exploring a local land trust for the area.
 - A funding committee has also been established, chaired by Mike Nordin.
- **Wahkiakum MRC:** Representative not in attendance.

Agency Updates

- **WA Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Corey Niles reported no major updates.
- **WA State Parks:** Matt Niles reported no major updates.
- **WA Department of Natural Resources:**
 - Mike Rechner discussed proposed **Sea-Link Trans-Pacific cables**, which would generate revenue for the State of Washington but could impact coastal users and Marine Spatial Plans (MSPs). Multiple cables are under consideration and will undergo analysis. Concerns raised include cable depth, fishing impacts, and bottom-surface disruption. Federal permitting is underway. One cable is approved and 5 additional cables are under consideration and would be authorized separately. All six cables would use a common conduit.
 - Larry Thevik noted that **Scott McMullen** leads the Oregon Cable Commission. These cables are in the heart of shallow water fisheries, especially crab. Cables laying on the

- ocean bottom (not trenched) create issues (such as snagging). This may be a new ocean use, and WCMAC should discuss this activity in detail
- o Molly Bold shared local stakeholder feedback, including city council discussions, public engagement efforts, and outreach challenges by project leaders with the fishing community. She noted the project team has done similar projects in southeast Alaska (near Ketchikan, for instance) and suggested inviting related stakeholders to future meetings to help communication and understanding.
- o Matt Niles added that drilling (for cable trenchment) will require a DNR easement from WA State Parks. The company has leased an upland parcel and plan to drill downward, with the exit point still to be determined.
- Oregon did some similar cable trenching but the cables for that project are 30-40km long (it is not a transcontinental cable but is used for wave energy testing purposes).
 - o Peter is interested in the coastal impacts on this project.
 - o Link to PacWave Construction Updates - [PacWave Updates – PacWave](#)
 - o Link to Oregon Fisherman's Cable Committee site - [OFCC - Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee](#)
 - o WCMAC members agreed we need additional speakers on this topic for our next WCMAC meeting in December.
- **WA Department of Commerce:** Stephanie Bowman has transitioned from her Commerce role; Kirk Esmond hopes a replacement will be appointed by year-end.
- **Dept of Ecology** – Representative not in attendance.

General Coastal Updates

- Peter Steelquist:
 - o Shared progress on plastic waste policies and legislative efforts (and is searching for bill sponsors).
 - o Washington faces a \$421 million deficit this biennium and \$903 million over the next two biennia, likely impacting bill passage.
 - o The Department of the Interior noted the pending release of the five-year offshore drilling mandate originally drafted under the Trump administration; it remains unclear whether Washington and Oregon will be included. This plan should be available in mid-October.
 - o Washington oil deposits are not large, and it's not clear if extracting oil from the Washington coast would be economically feasible.
 - o WCMAC needs to be proactive in protecting our resources from drilling projects that offer limited benefit.
 - o Washington could see increases in tanker traffic.
- Larry Thevik commented that the crab fishery season ended with 16 million pounds landed—within projections of 15–17 million—and a market value exceeding **\$110 million** before processing and transport. This includes state coastal (not including Puget Sound) and tribal catch. It was a great crab season.

- Mike Nordin reported restoration outcomes: Naselle reopening nine square miles of salmon habitat, and planted 10 miles of riparian zones, 90% livestock exclusion fencing, the third phase on North Cove/Washaway Beach Project and progress on the Graveyard Spit project. This improves resilience and we are starting to see Razor Clams in the area.
- Kate Little:
 - Reported that Sea Grant is close to receiving almost all the \$4 million in requested funding for FY25.
 - The Federal shutdown has had very limited impact to SeaGrant thus far.
 - Five new Coastal Resilience Fellows have been selected, with more information about their projects and placements to come. Link for more info - [WSG welcomes inaugural cohort of Coastal Resilience Fellows – Washington Sea Grant](#)
 - Pacific Conservation District community workshops – in South Bend October 21.
 - Willapa/Grays Harbor Estuary Collaborative Fall Meeting – October 29 in South Bend.
- Molly Bold:
 - Provided updates on Westport Marina and noted that coastal communities continue to face challenges related to poverty and unemployment.
 - She also highlighted the soybean mill export facility being expanded, emphasizing its economic and shipping impact on the local community. This results in \$60m of wages to Gray's Harbor.
 - Port of Grays Harbor Terminal 4 expansion underway with local contractors; strong 2025 fishing season reported. MRAC next meets November 4 at Manchester Environmental Lab.
 - Noted that the 2024 fishing season was "a once-in-a-decade" year for fishing and resulted in great economic return.
- Michele Conrad shared this in the chat: Potential funds for MRC projects, in 2015, I worked with (former) Representative Brian Blake to establish the Washington Coast Restoration and Resilience Initiative (WCRRI) that is a grant program through RCO for habitat protection, restoration, and education projects. MRC projects that were "shovel-ready" were funded initially and the thought was thought MRC eligible projects would compete well for future funding. Link for additional info - [Washington Coast Restoration and Resiliency Initiative - RCO](#).

MRAC Update

The next MRAC meeting is 9:30am Nov 4th – Manchester Environment Lab in Port Orchard.

Public Comment

There were no public comments in the morning public comment period.

MRC Funding

- Mike Nordin shares comments and leads a discussion – MRC funding has decreased since MRCs were created in 2008. Pacific Conservation District has been donating money to the MRC, but the lack of funding is beginning to impact outcomes. But this district funding is waning and has been recently reduced.
- WCMAC exists due to the MRCs and Mike would like to see at least 50% of the MRC coordinator position funded. WCMAC should consider have someone have the responsibility of duties including Grant Writing to help the MRCs secure funding. Among other responsibilities, Chris Wallbillig is the MRC coordinator for WDFW. He does a great job but is stretched thin, we'd love to have him focus on MRCs full time.
- What we'd like to accomplish this year is to improve legislative awareness of this problem. We won't necessarily request money in 2026. Corey Niles counters that WDFW takes the MRCs very seriously, and Mike Nordin replies he thinks in the past that MRCs may not have been taken seriously, but didn't mean to indicate the MRCs aren't taken seriously now.

Letter of Thanks for Cascadia and Nicole Gutierrez

Casey brings up that an agenda item was missed. We'd like to write a letter of thanks and acknowledgement for Cascadia's and Nicole Gutierrez' work on the WCMAC over the last several years. Rod will work with the Steering Committee and send that letter.

Economic Resilience

Meeting recording

- Rod Fleck leads a discussion and shares that WCMAC has done a great job of discussing and making recommendations on ecologic/environmental resilience. We'd like to have similar impact on Economic resilience in our coastal zones.
- We'd like to promote Social, Economic, and Ecologic resiliency.
- Coastal zones have high levels of poverty and low median wages.
- Larry Thevik doesn't believe it's possible to separate economic resilience from environmental resilience – they are just too intertwined. He'd like WCMAC to determine what assets we have and then determine ways to improve them. We also have some stressors (risks) like green crab, burrowing shrimp, and erosion and need to enhance public access to the coastal resources.
- Michele Conrad has done economic study work in this area with WDFW, including around Puget Sound and off the coast. The report was published in 2008 and it probably needs an update. Her work thus far does not include area tribes or freshwater fisheries. In June 2022,

WCMAC established the OSW Tech Committee. We should probably review that and define our preferred outcomes similarly.

- Brian Blake refers to an Ocean Acidification study done circa 2014 and suggests we need to consider new science published since then to help determine any additional impacts (such as warming ocean areas) to fisheries and other economic factors. Kate Litle suggests looking at previous meeting minutes. Larry would like tribal input on this topic. While tribal management doesn't participate in WCMAC discussions, there may be other tribal members who will engage.
- Rod Fleck, Michele Conrad, Keven Decker (via Kate Litle), and Larry Thevik will work to develop a one-page document to establish a technical/working committee.
- Kevin Decker is working on a proposal for \$500k to help small businesses coastal communities prepare for Sea-Level Rise, and to help coastal communities identify projects that produce co-benefits to help economic resilience and resilience to the risk of coastal hazards.

Fireworks and Marine Debris

Meeting recording

- Peter Steelquist, Lee First, Bruce Rittenhouse, and Eleanor Hines shared a presentation with data around the costs of Fireworks and Marine Debris cleanups.
- Many people, including families, visit the outer coast each 4th of July, drive on the beach and set off fireworks. They leave hundreds of thousands of pounds of "5th of July" debris. There were more than 42 tons of fireworks debris from Grays Harbor beaches (Ocean Shores, Pacific Beach, Westport, and Grayland) alone that was cleaned up in July 2025. The cost of just Ocean Shores cleanup is \$60,393.70, not including volunteer hours.
- Banning individual fireworks is one solution, but the economic impact to local economies could be significant. Other options include additional taxes on fireworks to pay for the clean up. However, this is problematic as many fireworks are sold by the area tribes and the state of Washington cannot impose taxes on them. Another potential solution is designating certain zones where lighting individual fireworks is allowed (prohibiting in other areas) to make cleanup easier. Fireworks are banned on DNR lands, but that is just a small portion of the overall coast.
- Kate believes we should consult area tribes before we make any recommendation. Many of the Fireworks are sold by the tribes. The area tribes have largely been absent from WCMAC proceedings; however, they may have technical staff that would be willing to participate in WCMAC discussions. The [Centennial Accord Meeting](#) in October would be a great place to bring this up. Larry Thevik adds that WCMAC does have a history of working with the Quinault, for example in opposition to the proposed oil terminal.
- The Steering Committee will discuss this topic and a timeline in more detail. We may submit for a resolution instead of legislation. The Department of Ecology has litter funds that may be able to be used to fund clean-up efforts. And Mike Rechner will investigate if DNR has any

funds that could be used to reimburse costs. Peter can work with Mike directly to determine if any are available.

Public Comment

Meeting recording

- Teri Wright says the Hoquiam Pellet Plant could impact the Shahalis flow due to the doubling of logging in the area and it could impact the Chinook salmon, which is in the process of being listed as threatened or endangered. The pellet plant is going to do a lot of environmental damage and only result in 4 jobs.
- Lee First comments that a pollution report is due in two weeks and we may want to review the conclusions of the report at the next WCMAC meeting.
- Molly Bold counters that the jobs impact is MUCH greater and we may want to have someone from the Hoquiam Pellet Plant project speak to WCMAC to counter some of the misinformation that seems to be spreading regarding the project. The plant does not use whole logs. This will be discussed at the Steering Committee meeting as a potential topic for the December 3rd WCMAC meeting.

Closing and Adjournment

- 2026 Meeting schedule
 - We'd like everyone to review calendars and be ready to share 2026 dates that don't work due to conflicts like the WDFW North of Falcon meeting.
 - Dave to send out a Doodle poll and possibly a survey to determine the best dates for our 2026 meetings, which have to be published sometime in January.
 - The 2025 schedule avoided major conflicts and worked out pretty well.
 - https://www.pcouncil.org/council_meeting/2025-council-meeting-schedule/
- Next WCMAC Meeting: December 3, 2025. Potential agenda items include ocean cables briefing, federal drilling proposal, fireworks follow-up, economic resilience, Hoquiam Pellet plant, WCMAC Budget letter to the Governor (see note below) and coastal program updates.
- WCMAC's budget letter to the Governor this year will be later this usual. We will wait until the Governor publishes the state budget. We don't anticipate many new initiatives this year.
- Meeting adjourned at **2:43pm**

Action Items

Action	Assignee	Notes
Write a one-page document to establish an Economic Resilience Committee	Rod Fleck, Chair, Kate Litle, Larry Thevik, Michele Conrad, Kevin Decker	Purpose/charge, key questions, needed expertise, expected outputs, draft timeline.
Discuss next steps for Fireworks and Marine Debris discussion	Steering Committee	Review options and discuss recommendations for Governor.
Coordinate briefing on Sea-Link Ocean Cabling Project for Dec WCMAC meeting	Steering Committee, Facilitator	May have multiple presenters in December.
Write a letter of thanks and appreciation for Cascadia and Nicole Gutierrez' work on WCMAC.	Rod Fleck	
Poll WCMAC members for good and bad dates for 2026 WCMAC meetings	Facilitator	In process

Attachment A: Meeting Presentations

See next page for meeting presentations.

