

## State of Washington

**Program Names:** Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative

Ocean Policy Working Group

Puget Sound Partnership

Washington Marine Resources Programs

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

**Program Entities:** NW Straits Commission

Puget Sound Partnership

WA Dept Fish and Wildlife

WA Dept of Ecology, Shorelands Division

Counties

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program

**Program History: Authority and Date(s) Created:**

**1. [Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative](#)**

1998: The Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative was established by Congress in 1998. The initiative resulted from efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s to create a National Marine Sanctuary in northern Puget Sound around the San Juan Islands. Although the federal sanctuary process was abandoned in 1996 due to strong local opposition, on-going concerns for the health of marine resources in the region led to the Murray-Metcalf Commission (MMC) in 1997 (named for Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Jack Metcalf) to explore alternatives for protecting and restoring marine resources in the Northwest Straits. The [MMC report](#) led to Congressional action in 1998 to create the NW Straits Initiative. In 2009 the US House voted to reauthorize the NSI for an additional five years; Senate action is pending.

**2. [Puget Sound Partnership](#)**

2007: The Partnership was created in 2007 by the [Washington legislature](#) to bring together citizens, governments, tribes, scientists and businesses to restore and protect Puget Sound. It was formed as a successor to the Puget Sound Action Team, a joint state and federal EPA initiative to address issues of water quality and environmental health in Puget Sound. The Partnership is guided by a seven member Leadership Council appointed by the Governor.

**3. Ocean Policy Working Group/Washington [Ocean Action Plan](#)**

2005: The Washington Legislature directed the Governor to prepare a report and recommendations for improvements in coordination among state agencies and other jurisdictions; measures to protect and manage ocean resources; measures to finance ocean protection, management, and development programs; and legislation regarding ocean resources or policy ocean policy. Governor Gregoire appointed the Ocean Policy Working Group with nineteen members. The resulting [2006 Action Plan](#) set the stage for legislation in 2007 and 2008 creating county Marine Resource Committees and for guiding Washington's participation in the West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health.

**4. [State Coastal Marine resources committees](#)**

2007 and 2008: The Washington legislative sessions authorized counties in southern Puget Sound and on the Outer Coast to establish county-based marine resources committees. This authorization complements the marine resource committees established for northern Puget Sound under the federal Northwest Straits marine conservation initiative.

## 5. [The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary](#) (OCNMS)

1994: The OCNMS was established by Congress in 1994 and shares 65 miles of coastline with Olympic National Park, with which it co-manages the intertidal zone. OCNMS includes 135 miles of shore between Cape Flattery and the Copalis River and extends seaward 25 to 40 miles encompassing 3,310 square miles of ocean area, primarily continental shelf, as well as parts of three major submarine canyons, the Nitinat, the Quinault, and the Juan de Fuca. Three national wildlife refuges are within the Sanctuary: Flattery Rocks NWR, Quillayute Needles NWR and Copalis Rock NWR. The Sanctuary is authorized by federal law to regulate most uses within the Sanctuary boundaries and has [adopted regulations](#) specific to the site.

### Funding Source(s)/Level:

1. **Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative:** The Initiative is supported by an annual federal appropriation from Congress, which supports Commission and MRC projects. The appropriation for FY10 is [\\$1.6 million](#). Funds are appropriated to NOAA, which then awards the funds to the Washington Department of Ecology, which acts as the fiscal agent for the Initiative. Counties may also provide some funding for local marine conservation projects.

For example, in [FY08](#) the total federal appropriation was: \$ 1,483,128, which was spent on:

- \$849,000 supports Marine Resources Committees and their projects;
- \$499,128 supports Commission staff, Marine Resources Committee training;
- \$135,000 supports tribal and regional ecosystem projects.

The FY07 federal appropriation was \$1.004 million.

2. [The Northwest Straits Foundation](#) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2002 to raise funding support for the projects and programs of the Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Initiative. Its board of directors mirrors the membership of the NW Straits Commission and the Executive Director of the Commission acts as director of the Foundation. The Foundation seeks outside funding to support research, monitoring, restoration, stewardship, conservation and education programs and projects. Its fund-raising project priorities and strategies are approved by the Foundation board at least annually in a [strategic workplan](#). The Foundation can also carry out projects that are identified in the approved project list, but do not have funding from either the Commission or county MRCs.

In 2009, the Northwest Straits Foundation received \$4.6 million in economic stimulus funds through NOAA for its derelict fishing gear project to be completed in 2010. In FY08, the Foundation raised \$703,384 from competitive grants. In FY07 the Foundation raised \$680,000.

3. **State-created Marine Resource Committees:** The Department of Fish and Wildlife is directed to provide support to the MRCs established in southern Puget Sound and the Outer Coast.

4. **Puget Sound Partnership** receives funding from a number of sources, including the National Environmental Protection Agency. A [Financing Strategy](#) was prepared in 2008 by consultants. This strategy focuses on innovative financing mechanisms related to the mission of the Partnership including payments for ecosystem services and markets; ‘innovative traditional’ tax and incentive programs, and voluntary private sector programs. The consultants also reviewed innovative financing mechanisms for environmental improvements in North Carolina and New York.

5. **Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary:** The OCNMS receives annual funding through NOAA for operations, education and outreach, and research.

### Key Program Elements:

1. **NW Straits Marine Conservation Initiative**

- a. **NWSCI Commission** – The work of the NW Straits Marine Conservation Initiative is guided by a [13-member Northwest Straits Commission](#), composed of five gubernatorial appointees, one Secretary of the Interior appointee representing coastal tribes, and a representative from each of the seven counties in the Northwest Straits region. Each of the seven county MRCs is citizen-based and includes representatives from commercial, recreational, scientific, educational, and environmental interests, as well as local and tribal governments. Annual work programs and [performance benchmarks](#) help partners guide project development and evaluate success.
- b. A [Science Team](#) provides advice to the Commission on science issues relevant to the goals and objectives of the Northwest Straits Initiative; helps guide deliberations of a Science and Technical Committee, and interact with similar science-advisory bodies in other regional initiatives and programs of mutual interest.
- c. **NWSCI Marine Resource Committees** – or MRCs – are county-based committees specified in the federal legislation that created the Initiative that carry out local projects and activities and advise the county on marine resources issues. MRCs are created and defined by county resolution or [ordinance](#). The affected counties are [San Juan](#), [Island](#), [Whatcom](#), [Jefferson](#), [Clallam](#), [Skagit](#), and [Snohomish](#) counties. MRCs are required by statute to be broadly representative, but counties have the ability to further specify membership or committee focus according to the needs of the county, its citizenry, and marine resources. Local MRCs carry out a variety of projects, such as planting Olympia oysters to help restore this tiny native oyster, surveying and mapping shorelines and beaches, discovering 32.5 miles of potential forage fish spawning habitat, [removing derelict fishing gear](#), and removing [toxic creosote](#) and [invasive \*Spartina\*](#).

## **2. Puget Sound Partnership**

The Partnership, created in 2008, is part of the National Estuary Program administered through the US EPA. It is directed by state statute to “define a strategic Action Agenda prioritizing necessary actions...that will be based on science and include clear, measurable goals for the recovery of the Puget Sound by 2020.” The Partnership is governed by a seven-member Leadership Council appointed by the governor. Because of the size and ecological characteristics of Puget Sound as an inland sea, the Partnership is directly involved in issues of marine resource management. Its projects and programs relate to those of the county Marine Resource Committees and the work of the NW Straits Commission. The Partnership adopted a [2009-2011 Strategic Plan](#) that includes strategies for science needed to support the work of the Partnership. A Science Panel prepared an extensive [Science Work Plan](#) for 2009-2011.

## **3. Ocean Policy Working Group**

Pursuant to legislative directive in 2005, Governor Gregoire appointed the Ocean Policy Working Group with nineteen members representing the departments of Ecology, Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, Community Trade & Economic Development, and Health, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Puget Sound Action Team, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, University of Washington’s School of Marine Affairs, local county commissioners from Clallam, Grays Harbor, and San Juan counties, and stakeholders from sectors such as ports and fisheries. Observers from tribal interests also participated. The [2006 Action Plan](#) prepared by the working group set the stage for legislation in 2007 and 2008 creating county Marine Resource Committees and for guiding Washington’s participation in the West Coast Governor’s Agreement on Ocean Health.

## **4. Coastal Marine Resource Committees**

The 2007 and 2008 Washington Legislature [authorized Marine Resource Committees](#) for counties in southern Puget Sound and the outer coast. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is responsible for providing staff assistance to these state-authorized MRCs. Counties authorized to establish marine resources committees in southern Puget Sound are King, Pierce, Thurston, Kitsap, and

Mason counties. Counties on the Outer coast authorized to form committees are Pacific (formed as a sub-committee of the Willapa Bay Water Resources Coordinating Council), [Grays Harbor](#), Clallam, Jefferson, and Wahkiakum counties. State law spells out the required membership and the steps for creating or designating a MRC.

The mission of the MRCs is to review data and resource conservation and management programs and make prioritized recommendations for additional measures to enhance protection of marine resources. MRCs have no management authority. The statute suggest that in developing recommendations the MRCs:

- utilize existing data and help to gather new data on the health of local marine resources;
- make scientifically based recommendations on local candidate sites for marine protected areas;
- work closely with local and state officials to help implement recommendations of the marine resources committee;
- promote public outreach and education around marine resource conservation and management issues; and
- engage in other activities that the initiating county deems appropriate.

Outer coast counties are urged to use the 2006 report [Ocean Action Plan: Enhancing Management of Washington State's Ocean and Outer Coasts](#) by the Washington ocean policy work group, established in 2005 by Washington Governor Gregoire, as a guide to developing and coordinating state and local ocean policy.

### **Coordination Functions:**

The Northwest Straits Commission acts as a coordinator for marine resource activities in northern Puget Sound.

No overall state-level coordination mechanism exists for ocean resources policy and management, either within Puget Sound or on the Outer Coast.

The Puget Sound Partnership, with its broad mandate, is the principal coordination body for activities related to restoration and protection of the ecological functions of Puget Sound. This broad mission does not provide the specific coordination oversight for the county-level Marine Resource Committees or state agency programs specific to marine resources.

### **Linkage of Science to Management:**

The NW Straits Commission Science Team is directed to advise the Commission on scientific issues related to its mission.

Puget Sound Partnership also has a strong marine science component of its biennial Action Plan. However, it is not clear how the results of research are coordinated and linked to management actions among a variety of program partners. The Partnership has a formal science team that is intended to guide the development of its scientific strategies and implementation along with the other advisory groups.

### **Data Collection/Sharing/Infrastructure:**

No formal mechanism exists either within Puget Sound or on the Outer Coast to coordinate data collection and application to a variety of management entities.

### **Assessment: Strengths/Weakness**

Strength:

- Strong political support for local Marine Resource Committees, both through the federal process (NWSMCI) and state (WDFW);

- Annual federal appropriation for NW Straits Initiative;
- A close institutional relationship between the NWSCI and Foundation as a 501(c)(3) that can seek outside funding;
- Performance benchmarks for all NWSCI projects.
- The Puget Sound Partnership has strong political and public support for its mission.

### Weakness:

Marine resource management and associated research programs fall into two major areas because of geography. The inland sea of Puget Sound, which is where the majority of management issues lie, has received the bulk of state and federal attention and funding. The Outer Coast has received little attention by the State of Washington, partly because of lack of perceived need and partly due to the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary which has management jurisdiction over nearly half of the outer coast ocean.

### Success/Failure

#### Success:

(an observation from one participant): The agencies (federal and state) seem to be working in better coordination with each other since the Puget Sound Partnership began. Many successful projects completed at the local level through the county MRCs.

#### Weakness:

Puget Sound is a large and complex body of water and associated set of ecosystems. It is yet to be determined whether the PSP approach can truly make a difference in improving the water quality and ecological health of Puget Sound.

### Applicability to Oregon

- The strong partnership between the Northwest Straits Initiative and the NW Straits Foundation as a 501(c)(3) offers a good model for closer examination and possible creation by Oregon.
- Performance benchmarks for projects enables specific linkage between projects funded by the Commission and its overall goals.
- Annual report is a good practice that increases accountability although it does take staff resources to complete.

#### Sources:

Various websites; personal communication with Ginny Broadhurst, Executive Director, NW Straits Initiative.