



# West Coast OCEAN ALLIANCE

February 2022

Member Call

## SUMMARY

Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### CALL SUMMARY

#### Federal Ocean Policy Committee Update

*Deerin Babb-Brott, Assistant Director at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, provided an update on the latest activities of the federal Ocean Policy Committee (OPC).*

*Note: Edited for clarity and brevity.*

Thank you for the opportunity to join you all today. I've worked with a number of you and look forward to meeting those that I haven't going forward. I should note that I'm joined by my colleague Emily Menashes (Deputy Director for Ocean and Coastal Policy at the White House Council on Environmental Policy (CEQ), on detail from NOAA). Emily is Co-chair of the federal Ocean Policy Committee (OPC). We're also joined by Emily's new Knauss Fellow, Brendan Philip, who is a West Coast native himself.

So jumping right in, I'll say first we would like to have this be a continuing conversation. We'll walk through what the OPC has been up to and where it's headed. But a top priority for us is to hear more about the work of the West Coast Ocean Alliance (WCOA) and all of you as members, where it is headed, and what we can do to support it. So in this region along with other regions, these types of management bodies are going to be key to the work we're doing at the OPC going forward.

With that preamble, what the OPC is really focusing on is four high level areas:

- 1) Support and enhance regional decision-making and stakeholder engagement;
- 2) Advancing a sustainable ocean economy
- 3) Developing ocean climate solutions
- 4) Connect investment in and application of applied science to defined management needs

Before going further into these four areas, as background on our organizational structure, the actual OPC is the principal level committee. There are two subcommittees to OPC: one on ocean, science, technology policy (OSTP) and one on ocean resource management (ORM). A lot of the work here is going to be conducted under the ORM subcommittee. The ORM subcommittee is co-chaired by DOI, NOAA, CEQ and the Dept. of Navy.

The focus on support for regions is increasingly reflected in policy and budgets. Beginning under the Obama years, continuing through the Trump administration and now, certainly in this administration regions are a key focus. There's recognition that they are the right scale, they are the right the right group of governments and representatives with the ability to solve problems. For the OPC, this group was put into law in early 2021, and that legislation specifically directs engagement and support for regions and for regional ocean partnerships by name. An example of the benefit of that sort of sustained attention is the upcoming funding, \$56M over five years through the federal infrastructure bill, that the WCOA will have access to. We look forward to building on that both the momentum and the products that it helps develop going forward.

For your colleagues in the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic regions, for example, the ocean action plans that they completed under President Obama contained best management practices, and things like pre-application stakeholder engagement, and government engagement plans. Those regions are now actively addressing issues like wind development, intersection with fisheries, community engagement, and other kinds of infrastructure development, and what we'd like to do is use the tools and the lessons learned in those regions. This may include elements like how best to use ocean data, or scheduling consultation at appropriate times in order to avoid the most important conflicts that may arise.

Similarly, from the West Coast, we would look to the work done in your handbook on tribal engagement as a really important product that the West Coast can contribute to the national conversation, and would like to talk to you more about how we can use that going forward in a way that that could work for everyone across the country.

For the focus on a sustainable ocean economy, in November the United States joined what's called the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which is an international fourteen-nation body, with each national committed to developing a plan for each nation's areas protect effectively, to develop sustainably, and to prosper equitably. By joining this panel, the US committed to develop a national ocean plan within five years. That ocean plan will be built around five themes, which are common across all the participating nations: ocean health, ocean wealth, ocean knowledge, ocean equity, and finance. The themes and outcomes of this panel are very consistent and track very closely with this administration's priorities across the board, and particularly for those associated with oceans. It's an emphasis on science equity, inclusion, sustainability, and in our case, wanting to push this as much as possible into the regions for discussion to derive and derive a lot of what this will look like from the regions themselves.

We'd like to start by developing a national strategy for this work, and that conversation will begin in the coming few months. And this is a conversation we very much would like to continue with you at the WCOA. Some of this work will be just at the federal level, but there are also parts of it, a lot of it, I think, which is going to be driven by an articulation by each of the regions in terms of what does what is a sustainable ocean economy mean to them, what do the regions want to accomplish, what information tools, what sources do we need to do that, and how do we put that in a package, which works across the board nationally. Importantly, this is not a National Ocean Council, or 'Regional Planning Body 2.0' approach. Many of the concepts are the same, but this is a much less prescriptive approach, and it's mean to truly be bottom up. One of the outcomes

of the Obama administration work on this was that it jump-started the process of organizing ourselves as regions, and ensuring we wend down that path to build on the great ocean work already in place and done before. Now, we have the opportunity to take a concept, like a national strategy, and then a national implementation plan, and build that more organically with a direct input and participation of, for example, the West Coast Ocean Alliance.

All of this work will be built around lots of conversations and engagement, to help define our terms. I can't tell you what exactly a "sustainable ocean economy" is right now and we're not coming out with a definition first, and then asking you to contribute to it. We're saying, what does that mean to you in the region? And how do we build that going forward?

Another piece that the OPC is working on is developing an Ocean Climate Action Plan, focusing on green shipping, blue carbon, ocean renewables, protected areas, climate-ready fisheries, perhaps other things. This is going to be more of a federal-level effort, understanding the activities that agencies are already engaging in those in those areas and sectors, putting those together and seeing what does that look like in terms of our emission reduction profile over time, and are there other things that we want to add to that type of plan, what we should do different, increase our ambition in these areas, or whatever that might be. We'll keep you engaged informed about that.

We are also focusing on use-inspired science and technology work at the federal level, connecting the regional needs and federal agency support, and how we link science to actual policy. That will be a part of the ongoing discussion, with the immediate focus is on stakeholder engagement, deconfliction, engaging governments, providing spatial data tools, and working on the national strategy for sustainable ocean economy.

#### Question & Answer

Note: Edited for clarity and brevity.

Chad Bowechop, Makah Tribal Councilman: Thank you for the update Deerin, its great to be in contact with you and the OPC again. We want to underscore the importance of Makah as a sovereign co-manager with federal treaty rights, and a clear place at this table for resource management. We hope that a continued priority for the Biden Administration is to ensure treaty rights are not reactionary, and that instead we can institutionalize efficiencies towards working with Tribal governments into federal policy and management. We also hope to bring federal agencies out of their silos and work with treaties in a comprehensive way. Tribal governments are not stakeholders, we are sovereign managers, and must be treated as such. There is much work to be done on a range of topics, but we look forward to working with all of our partners, federal, state and otherwise, to utilize our treaty rights and all statutory authorities as effectively as we can.

Deerin Babb-Brott: Thanks for this Chad, great to reconnect with you. At the OPC we have not yet developed a full plan for this conversation with federally-recognized and treaty tribes, but we will be doing so soon and certainly respect the distinction as co-managers, and not stakeholders. One area you may be interested in is our work with Canada and Mexico, who are also members of the Ocean Panel I highlighted, who are also developing their own national plans. We can keep you aware of how this might link to Makah's activities and links to Canada, in areas such as navigation or others. We look forward to updating you and this group on relevant federal actions on this multi-national initiatives moving forward.

Jennifer Hennessey, WA Governor's Office: So good to hear from you again Deerin. I am seeing a lot of alignment between the priorities you highlighted and the topics we're most interested in here in our West Coast region. We have been grappling this issues for over a decade, like creating a solid scientific basis for understanding our oceans, and have made progress through the work of our Data Portal. We are advancing projects like ocean health indicators to better understand the impacts of climate. We are also tracking things like marine heat waves and die-offs of kelp, among other impacts. We obviously also have a strong interest in how offshore wind development proceeds in federal waters, and want to use the WCOA as a forum for those conversations. I also strongly believe the West Coast is a great model for international engagement across borders, and we look forward to staying engaged with the OPC to provide regional and state input moving forward, and how we can share the strong lessons we have from the West Coast.

Deerin Babb-Brott: Thanks Jen, great to hear from you. Our next steps in terms of what you described will definitely be something we stay in touch with you and the WCOA on, and how we can hear from you on the best ways to proceed. There will essentially be two parallel paths on that, one to ask for your help in how to engage broadly in the region, and second to hear directly from tribes and states on what areas you are most interested in working together on, and how we can do that with you.

Caren Braby, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife / Pacific Fishery Management Council Liason: Thank you for all these updates, and its very exciting to hear about these federal ocean efforts being renewed. Offshore wind is a huge issue for the West Coast, and we are also closely tracking climate-ready fisheries and the goals of the national conversation around the 30x30 initiative. These are all areas the West Coast is doing a lot of work on, and I want to emphasize the need for sound science to inform all decision-making. We need strong federal support for monitoring of marine species, and also to track impacts of human developments like offshore wind. In Oregon we have one of the strongest wild fisheries in the US, and we want to continue to keep those fisheries healthy and robust even as ocean uses change. I encourage you to engage those who use the oceans regularly, like fishermen, in any stakeholder outreach. And as we explore new uses of the ocean, please remember the importance of current and historical uses of the ocean, and factor that into your efforts.

Deerin Babb-Brott: Thanks Caren. We will definitely be reaching out directly to state fisheries managers like you moving forward, as well as the PFMC to ensure we recognized their statutory role and efforts overall. We also are definitely prioritizing the use of sound science, and also will be reaching out to Tribes to engage on traditional ecological knowledge and how it can be used.

Steve Weisberg, SCCWRP / West Coast Ocean Data Portal Co-chair: I think there are some really interesting issues that take place on the West Coast, and our region presents some interesting differences when compared to the other regions of the US. There are two key things I'd like to point out: first, we have a coastal upwelling system here, and some of the things like hypoxia and acidification are more pronounced on the West Coast, which makes it even more important to work together on those issues, especially with federal agencies. Second, our West Coast is really more of a true oceanic system when compared to other regions, which have more direct local inputs and impacts that remain localized. We have a more connected ocean system up and down the coast, so our states and other partners are linked in that important way. All of which makes this regional approach that much more relevant.

Deerin Babb-Brott: Thanks Steve. I think you are underscoring really important points, especially around how we need to approach each region in a distinct ways, and I look forward to talking more with you and the WCOA and Data Portal about what you highlighted.

Patty Snow, Oregon Coastal Program: You had mentioned that the OPC would be supporting development of a national ocean plan; is this something you envision the regions providing input in, including possibly developing new regional ocean plans to flow into that work?

Deerin Babb-Brott: Great question Patty. One key point is we are still early in this process and just beginning to define our terms for a national strategy, and we want everyone to provide input on that to start. We see regions have a key role in helping define that, but we also need to all agree on what we're trying to accomplish, and how we can best frame that. We look forward to talking more with the regions about that.

Becky Smyth, NOAA Office of Coastal Management: Thanks very much for your time today Deerin. Reflecting on what we've talked about today, I think the West Coast is looking forward to engaging with you and the OPC on a two-way conversation on this work. We have a strong framework about engaging with tribes and states, especially tribes, and we're happy to share that with other regions. Our ocean health scorecard is also a useful tool to inform decision-making and awareness. All of these and others are great opportunities to continue to engage in our region, and we look forward to it.

## **Federal Infrastructure Bill – Regional Ocean Partnership Funding**

*John Hansen (WCOA) provided an update on the next steps with the ROP funding included in the federal infrastructure bill.*

- The federal infrastructure bill includes \$56M total over the next five years to support Regional Ocean Partnerships around the US, which is anticipated to be available this fall. We are waiting on further guidance from NOAA on exactly how that funding will be planned for and distributed, but we expect more clarity this spring. For the West Coast, we are continuing our discussions within the WCOA to get member input on potential funding priorities and associated deliverables. Please use the Padlet app link we have shared previously to view input received to date and share your own feedback. We will also continue to use our Tribal Caucus and State Caucus calls to get your input, and I am also available via email and 1x1 calls to discuss further.
  - Becky Smyth, NOAA OCM: Process-wise, Congress has required all federal agencies to submit spend plans associated with the IJJA funding, so we'll be submitting that in February, after it gets clearance through our agency and the Dept. of Commerce. We hope to get approval from Congress on the spend plans in March, and parallel to that we are doing outreach to tribes around the country to get input on this and other funding we are overseeing. I'd also emphasize that this is a five year funding program, and we should be sure to explain how all five years of funding can be most effectively used, and how ROPs want to argue for sustained funding beyond these five years.

- Andy Lanier, Oregon DLCD / WCODP: Is there a deadline for when we need to submit input to the Padlet form or otherwise? John: We don't have any firm deadlines as we wait for more guidance from NOAA, but I am suggesting that mid-March is likely the time to expect all initial input to be needed in order to build a more formal funding proposal to NOAA later in the spring.

### **West Coast Ocean Data Portal Update**

*Andy Lanier (WCODP Co-Chair) provided an update on WCODP activities.*

- We continue our progress on the ocean health dashboard and the indicators we have discussed previously with this group. We also want to emphasize that we at the Portal believe that the ocean health dashboard tool is a great candidate for support via the new ROP funding, and could be a clear deliverable for the West Coast, especially as it relates to some of the national priorities we heard about on today's call.
- Second, we continue our work on the Spatial Coordination Framework tool, with clearer development of work task schedules and timelines coming into focus. We will be looking to WCOA members for feedback on your contacts, issues of interest and geography for this tool, with John Hansen contracted to support this work in the coming year. We will also be hoping to get feedback on the layout and design elements of the tool, which could become something of a 'Blue Pages' for the West Coast and ocean issues.
- Lastly, we have been making technical enhancements to the Data Portal, and by extension continuing development of the OROWindMap tool to support offshore wind planning in Oregon through data visualization. We will be adding some new capabilities in the coming weeks, and that will cascade into the Data Portal and be something to explore as a potentially regionally-useful tool.
- If you have questions or would like more information please contact Marisa at [marisa@westcoastoceanalliance.org](mailto:marisa@westcoastoceanalliance.org).

### **Offshore Wind Updates**

*Due to time constraints, an update on offshore wind was not shared in real-time on the call, but included in a written update shared by email after the call.*

END CALL