

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
WEST COAST GOVERNOR'S AGREEMENT (WCGA) ON OCEAN HEALTH

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) believes the West Coast Governor's Agreement on ocean health is a positive attempt to coordinate regional management efforts. It appears to be an effort to emulate what has already been occurring with fishery management for many years. We are hopeful that it is not an attempt to usurp a collaborative process that has been successfully prosecuted for a long period of time. Fishery management has long been a cooperative effort involving the public, industry, state, federal, and congressional entities.

The GAP believes that fishery management groups and processes should be an integral part of this approach to addressing ocean health. Statements that reflect this sentiment should be included in this agreement. This process should maintain the political transparency and scientific scrutiny required within fishery management. It is vitally important for all stakeholders to be intimately involved in shaping these policy issues.

We have specific comments on the following priority areas within the Governors' Agreement:

Protecting and restoring healthy ocean and coastal habitats.

A strict definition of the term 'healthy' must be established.

Promoting the effective implementation of ecosystem-based management of our ocean and coastal resources.

Promote funding for the existing ecosystem based management activities that are underway at state and federal fishery management agencies. All proposed new activities (aquaculture, wave energy, etc.) should be required to comply with all federal and state environmental regulations.

Increasing awareness and literacy among our citizens.

The public has a right to receive information about the processes involved with the sustainable harvest of ocean resources. Objective discussions about this issue are often missing from public outreach efforts relating to marine resources.

Expanding ocean and coastal scientific information, research, and monitoring.

This is critical for rational and sustainable (Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act [MSA]) use of ocean resources. Uncertainty with data comprises a major hurdle in ensuring sustainable (MSA) fisheries. A complete inventory of all existing ocean activities must be compiled in order to assess the true impacts of any new proposals.

Fostering sustainable economic development throughout our diverse coastal communities.

Fisheries should be a top priority as should any economic activity that is already in place. This would be an excellent opportunity to change the focus from one of funding fishery constraints to one of investing in fishery economic health and opportunity.

There are continuing and future concerns regarding jurisdictional conflicts that exist in state and federal waters. The GAP recommends that this agreement address these issues. Example: Coastal Zone Management Act, National Marine Sanctuaries Act vs. MSA. It is recommended that NOAA General Counsel should review this agreement and provide clarification on this issue.

PFMC  
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