
November 16, 2010

WEST COAST MARINE DEBRIS ALLIANCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Governors of Oregon, Washington and California and the Premier of British Columbia today announced that the four jurisdictions would be joining together to create a coast-wide marine debris alliance and to develop a detailed marine debris strategic plan for the West Coast. The Governors and Premier were meeting at the annual Leaders Forum of the Pacific Coast Collaborative in Davis, California.

To support the alliance, Governors of Oregon, Washington and California announced a \$100,000 funding grant. The Premier of British Columbia also announced a \$30,000 allocation to support action on marine debris in British Columbia.

In 2006, Washington Governor Chris Gregoire, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, and California Governor Schwarzenegger, signed the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA) and subsequently formed work groups to address priority ocean health-related issues, including the problem of marine debris. The marine debris workgroup developed a work plan that was released earlier this year. The work plan called for the development of a detailed "tri-state marine debris strategy," and called for the formation of a West Coast Marine Debris Alliance. The Alliance would consist of state, federal, local and tribal governments as well as non-governmental organizations, fishermen, and industry representatives, to meet regularly and oversee the development and implementation of the strategic plan to reduce marine debris.

To further support and extend joint action coast-wide, in February 2010 the three Governors and the Premier of British Columbia signed a Pacific Coast Collaborative Action Plan on Ocean Conservation and Coastal Climate Adaptation. The Pacific Coast Collaborative was established by Memorandum in 2008, signed by the Governors of California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska, and the Premier of British Columbia. The Collaborative was formed to work collaboratively on shared regional concerns such as energy, transportation, and ocean health.

The \$100,000 announced today by the West Coast Governors for this effort was part of an earlier \$500,000 congressional appropriation to fund various initiatives under the WCGA.

In offering his full support for this work, Governor Schwarzenegger stated that "land-based sources of debris are by far the largest contributor to the growing amount of trash and plastic

located in the North Pacific Gyre. We have a problem out there, and we have a responsibility to do our part to reduce the amount of debris that ends up in the North Pacific Gyre.”

In supporting this work, Governor Kulongoski said “it is just common sense that we stop using our oceans as a dumping ground for plastics and debris. The Alliance will provide a much-needed boost to deal with this problem.”

Governor Gregoire added that the Alliance “will not be a top down effort. The best way to be successful is if we all pitch in together. We have many local governments and hundreds of committed volunteers working to clean up our coast lines and working on finding creative ways to reduce marine debris.”

Premier Campbell said, “I applaud this initiative on marine debris by the West Coast governors and am pleased to have British Columbia participate with California, Oregon and Washington in this effort. British Columbia has been focusing on near shore debris issues such as derelict gear and vessels, as well as industry-led product stewardship that helps reduce the amount of harmful materials that end up in the environment. I want to thank our partners in the Pacific Coast Collaborative for working with us to address issues related to the economy and the environment.”

The Governors and Premier also announced today their interest in coast-wide efforts to promote product stewardship, which includes the reduction of product materials that contribute to marine debris. Product stewardship involves developing market-based policies to encourage life-cycle management of products including redesign and toxics reduction. The Governors and Premier asked that the PCC be provided with a report next year on this initiative.

Eben Schwartz, chair of the marine debris work group, and an official of the California Coastal Commission, welcomed the support for their work from the three governors and the premier. “We have invested a lot of work and a lot of hope in trying to curb the problem of debris in our marine environment. We are appreciative of the Government of British Columbia’s interest in working more closely with us on marine debris and product stewardship.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON WEST COAST MARINE DEBRIS INITIATIVE

- September 2006, the Governors of Oregon, Washington and California signed the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGA).
- Under this agreement, and working with federal agencies, stakeholders and others, the WCGA released an Action Plan in 2008 that outlined priorities for actions to protect and improve the health of our coasts and marine waters.
- Work groups were also established across ten issue areas in 2008 to develop work plans to address the priorities set forth in the Action Plan.
- One of the work groups established was for marine debris. The work group consists of various state, federal and tribal officials, citizen-based groups, and universities. The Chair is Eben Schwartz from the California Coastal Commission.
- The marine debris work group released its work plan in January of this year. Among other recommendations, this group called for the creation of a tri-state marine debris alliance to oversee the development and implementation of a strategic plan to reduce the problem of debris in our marine environment.
- The U.S. Congress provided \$500,000 to the WCGA to fund initiatives supported by the WCGA. Earlier this month (October), the WCGA allocated \$475,000 to its work groups to move ahead with the implementation of key work plan components. The marine debris work group was a recipient of \$100,000 from these funds.
- The work plan for marine debris calls for a multi-pronged effort to address derelict fishing gear, land and ocean-based debris, debris prevention measures, and public outreach and education on marine debris. Many initiatives are already underway in the three states and B.C. to recover derelict fishing gear and vessels, and to reduce and clean up land-based debris
- Land-based marine debris comes from a wide variety of sources: urban runoff, combined sewer overflows, beach visitors, solid waste and garbage management, industrial activities, ports and marinas, construction, and illegal dumping or littering. Urban runoff is the primary source of marine debris, and littering is the source of most trash in urban runoff. Plastic makes up the largest percentage of marine debris by composition (60-80 percent). Ocean-based debris originates from vessels of all types.
- The so-called "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is a very large area (size of Texas or larger) in the North Pacific (known as the North Pacific Gyre) where rotational currents have trapped large amounts of marine debris. The composition of the debris is largely decomposed plastic. It is estimated that 80% of the debris from the ocean comes from

land-based sources, although the exact composition of the Garbage Patch is unknown. The extent of the debris caught in the North Pacific Gyre is also unknown, as is the impact on ocean health, including West Coast-based fisheries.

- The Government of British Columbia, working in collaboration with California, Oregon and Washington, has been a leader in developing a market-based product stewardship policy of extended producer responsibility based on industry and consumers taking full life cycle responsibility of the products they produce and use. Extended producer responsibility encourages the redesign of products including reducing the use of toxic materials in product manufacture as well as making them more durable, reusable and recyclable.