

# Washington Creates Ocean Acidification Panel

Their goal: What can we do about acidifying seas? – By Jennifer Langston on Sightline Daily, 29 March 2012



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Washington State has become the first in the nation to convene an expert panel to tackle ocean acidification—a phenomenon driven by fossil fuel emissions and polluted runoff that threatens the Northwest’s shellfish and seafood industry.

(For much more on the problem and what’s driving it, see [Sightline’s primer](#) and [blog series](#) on Northwest Ocean Acidification.)

In a nutshell, excess carbon dioxide causes oceans to become more acidic, and also removes key building blocks that thousands of species need to build shells and skeletons. This carbon-dioxide-rich water has been linked to massive die-offs in Northwest oyster hatcheries. In laboratory experiments, the shelled animals that struggle or dissolve range from mussels to endangered abalone to cornerstones of the marine food web like krill and pteropods—tiny sea snails that make up more than half of the diet of some young Alaskan pink salmon.

And Northwest waters [are on the leading edge of the problem](#),

with some of the most acidic readings taken anywhere in the world's oceans.

Here's how panel co-chair Jay Manning put it today:

*This has some pretty scary ramifications for what this could mean, both for Puget Sound and our coasts here and globally. I think it's great that Washington is on the cutting edge of this issue. We're taking it on before just about anyone else is, and it's high time.*

Washington's blue ribbon acidification panel, convened by Gov. Chris Gregoire and made up of scientists, local and tribal officials, and seafood industry representatives, [has three tasks ahead of it](#). They expect to have their work done by this fall:

Read the rest of the story on [Sightline Daily](#).