WEST COAST GOVERNORS ALLIANCE on OCEAN HEALTH
CALIFORNIA OREGON WASHINGTON

WEST COAST REGIONAL DATA FRAMEWORK
DRAFT WORKSHOP PROCEEDING SUMMARY

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the presentations, discussions, and recommendations put forward during the "West Coast Regional Data Framework Workshop," held December 13-14, 2011, in Oakland, California. The workshop brought together approximately 60 representatives of state and federal agencies, tribes, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The majority of the attendees were technical staff members of these organizations (e.g., GIS specialists, database managers, and data developers) who work with ocean and coastal data specific to the West Coast.

The West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health (WCGA) sponsored the workshop in an effort to foster and support a regional community of coastal and marine data managers and users to address management needs and emerging planning efforts along the West Coast. This effort, along with other ongoing management and research initiatives, is poised to help shape a regionally coordinated approach by state, tribal, federal, academic, and NGO entities to inform a host of ocean management issues at the ecosystem scale. However, these regional efforts require access to, and sharing of, a broad range of data across traditional institutional and geographic boundaries.

The primary goal of the workshop was to formalize a Regional Data Framework (Framework) that establishes a Human Network (Network) and a Regional Data System (System) for linking the various data managers, users, and systems throughout the West Coast. The Framework will support regional coastal and marine resource management and research efforts, such as coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), fisheries management, and climate change planning and adaptation.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

1. Outline the scope, scale, audience, and approach of the Framework.
2. Formalize a Network of coastal and marine data managers and users on the West Coast.
3. Establish technical working groups, including identifying leader(s), operating procedures, and communication mechanisms to support Framework goals.
4. Create a draft implementation plan for a Framework that outlines key tasks, establishes a timeline for completing these tasks, and identifies partners and potential funding sources.

The workshop participants succeeded in achieving most of these goals; however, the last objective was put forward as a longer-term goal of the Framework, with an immediate recommendation to create an Action Coordination Team (ACT) under the WCGA. This recommendation reflects the need for a steering committee to coordinate the technical working groups established at the workshop, as well as develop a work plan for the Network. The Network is composed of workshop participants and additional parties with a vested interest in the goals of the Framework.

The main results of the workshop included an initial set of recommendations to improve geospatial data sharing and coordination on the West Coast. These results, along with a summary of the presentations and breakout group discussions, will be discussed in more detail in this report.

Summary of Workshop Recommendations

Vision Statement

The workshop participants coalesced around two visions for the Framework over the near- and long-term:

- Near-term: Increase the efficiency of coastal and marine geospatial data discovery to support West Coast ocean health.

- Long-term: Provide a single point of access for the data, decision-support tools, and human resources relevant to regional ocean and coastal management issues.

Driving Force

In light of the work that the WCGA has already completed in identifying and addressing pressing regional coastal and marine resource management issues, the workshop participants agreed that it would be fitting to focus the initial efforts of the Network on the issues represented by the WCGA's Action Coordination Teams (ACTs):

- Integrated Ecosystem Assessment
- Renewable Energy
- Seafloor Mapping
- Climate Change
- Sustainable Coastal Communities
- Sediment Management
- Marine Debris
- *Spartina* Eradication
- Ocean Awareness and Literacy
- Polluted Runoff

Phases

The group agreed on the following phased approach to achieving the Framework's goals, given the uncertain prospects for funding and staff support over the long term.

1. Formalize a Human Network by establishing a new WCGA Action Coordination Team (ACT) and nominating members to be included in ACT.
2. Assess existing data systems, metadata standards, and data user needs (among other work plan priorities to be determined).
3. Craft recommendations to address results of assessments.
4. Implement infrastructure, data, and outreach recommendations.

Technical Tasks for Network

To implement these phases, the following steps should be taken by the three working groups established at the workshop:

- Determine governance, organization, and user feedback mechanisms for the Network (Spring 2012, Outreach Working Group).
- Assess and agree on common standards for data compatibility and metadata development; suggest best practices for prioritizing, ingesting and sharing data (Summer-Fall 2012, Data Working Group with input from IT Working Group).
- Prioritize data gathering and identify data gaps based on user needs; focus on common needs of the WCGA ACTs, as well as needs identified by participants of the West Coast Coastal Atlas Workshops held in 2009 and 2010 (Fall 2012, Data Working Group).
- Assess data access and display formats and recommend options for a West Coast Data System (Summer 2012, IT Working Group).
- Develop a data registry and eventually a robust data system building off existing platforms (Fall 2012, IT Working Group).
- Identify agency/organization data "diplomats" and assess the institutional capacity of Network partners (Fall 2012, Outreach Working Group).

Summary Conclusion

The West Coast Regional Data Framework workshop was a huge step toward improving the regional coordination and accessibility of priority ocean and coastal data. By bringing together the technical expertise of state, federal, tribal, academic, and non-governmental organizations, this workshop resulted in new perspectives and potential solutions for how to improve regional data sharing. Beyond the technological solutions, the establishment of a formal Network of data managers, developers, and users operating under this Framework can connect people to data in ways that have not been possible in the past. This Network will serve to increase discovery and access to information about issues of regional significance, including those identified by the West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health. By closely affiliating with this respected regional ocean partnership, the Network gains an identity and can take advantage of those relationships already built with West Coast stakeholders. This is an important decision for guaranteeing the long-term sustainability and relevance of the West Coast Data Framework and ensuring easy and reliable access to priority regional data for West Coast stakeholders.