A Pacific County Vision for Updating the Shoreline Master Program

January 30, 2015
Community Visioning in the SMP Update Process

Pacific County currently is updating its Shoreline Master Program (SMP) as required under the Shoreline Management Act.¹ Community visioning is an important early step in the update process that allows citizens to express their preferred future for the county’s shorelines over the next 20 years. The outcome from this effort becomes a general framework for guiding how the county updates its SMP. It is also important in demonstrating how citizens can engage in constructive dialog throughout the process to develop common goals based on shared interests.

December 2014 Community Visioning Event

Pacific County hosted an evening community visioning event for the SMP update on December 18, 2014 at the Ilwaco Community Center. Approximately 30 participants from around the county participated in a lively discussion that lasted three hours.

The session began with an overview of why visioning is important to the SMP update process. The community visioning process

- Tells the world what Pacific County citizens want to accomplish through its SMP over the next 20 years
- Explains how the community intends to manage change to achieve that future
- Creates real outcomes through community decision-making
- Builds a cooperative, can-do spirit among citizens
- Identifies general principles that the community can build upon as it develops specific goals, policies, and regulations for its SMP

The evening’s work began with introducing the evening’s focus question, “What would you like to see the Pacific County Shoreline Master Program accomplish over the next 20 years?” Each participant was asked to first individually brainstorm ten accomplishments they would like to happen.

The next step involved session participants forming small groups of four to six people to share their ideas with one another. Each small group then had to choose at least three to five accomplishments to share with the group as a whole. They did this by summarizing each one of their ideas in large print on

¹ Chapter 90.58 RCW and Chapter 173-26 WAC
separate, letter-sized sheets of paper. Over 50 ideas were collected, posted on a sticky wall board, extensively discussed, and sorted into nine related themes by the entire group.

The final and most important step of the process was for the entire group to work together at assigning a title for each cluster. The naming process emphasizes consensual decision-making that reflects what everyone in the room wants to accomplish through the SMP update.

Appendix A contains a verbatim transcript of the outcome of this activity.

**A Pacific County Vision for Shoreline Management**

The following summary captures the essence of the conversation created through the visioning workshop and serves as a framework for guiding Pacific County in its update of the SMP.

**Sustain, Protect, & Restore Our Native Ecology**

Pacific County will strive to continuously sustain, protect, and restore its rich native ecology. Invasive species, fish barriers, coastal erosion, impacts to dunes, sea level rise, changing ocean conditions, and the mismanagement of our ocean resources are real threats to their existence in perpetuity. Identifying and choosing the right approaches that address these issues demand applying, and expanding, the application of best available science.

**Protect & Preserve Our Existing Sustainable Uses**

Aquaculture, agriculture, fishing, and wildlife are the foundation to the quality of life for Pacific County citizens and deliver significant benefits to the state and nation as a whole. To ensure a future for these critical assets, the Shoreline Master Program must provide for the protection and preservation they deserve.

The key to sustaining these uses is to manage carefully our estuarine and marine environments, wildlife assets, water quality conditions, and the agricultural productivity of our land. Not only should our planning efforts seek to pursue a no net loss approach for these resources, but we must strive to improve their health as well.
Having a Plan & Being Prepared

While the natural environment provides an incredible bounty for Pacific County residents, it sometimes presents a significant threat to public safety, too. We especially need to anticipate and plan for minimizing the dangers created by erosion along our Pacific coast and rivers as well as the potential for tsunamis. Managing future development appropriately in shoreline environments susceptible to these natural disasters will be an integral element of the Shoreline Master Program.

Manage Public Access through Education to Protect Private Property Rights

Pacific County currently provides a wide range of opportunities for the public to access and enjoy its freshwater and marine shorelines. However, it also is important to acknowledge that many of these shoreline environments, particularly Willapa Bay, are vital areas to the local water dependent economy of its residents. Mixing public access and recreational use in some of these aquatic environments can be especially disruptive to aquacultural activities.

Educating the public about how public access relates to private property rights is important to finding the right balance between promoting public access and protecting water-dependent uses. Thoughtful planning for public access to shorelines will prevent the potential impacts of public access to existing uses.

Effective Administration of the Shoreline Master Program

Effective implementation of a Shoreline Master Program and the long-term protection of the shoreline environment are dependent on how well Pacific County can administer its regulations over time. Achieving this outcome is dependent on the county’s ability to increase its capacity to provide an appropriate level of oversight and enforcement of not just its SMP, but for all of its shoreline protection programs.

Maximize our SMP Jurisdictional Scope/Interface and Keep it Simple

Pacific County’s economic foundation relies on the natural resources provided by the ocean and its bays and rivers. Protecting these natural resources today and long into the future will assure our survival as a community. Pacific
County must structure its updated Shoreline Master Program so that this goal is not lost.

A strong Shoreline Master Program should be a vital instrument for promoting locally based management of our natural resources important to our economy, especially those contributing to our aquaculture and fishing industries. The county will need to extend the jurisdictional influence of its Shoreline Master Program up to 200 miles offshore from our coastline to protect these industries from competing uses that pose a threat to their sustainability.

Updating the county’s critical areas protection regulations, including their integration into the Shoreline Master Program, will contribute the sustainability natural resources as well.

Finally, while the updated Shoreline Master Program needs to be a document that has far-reaching influence at protecting the county’s natural resource-based industries, it must do so in a style that exhibits clarity and simplicity.

Wise Management of Our Resources

The Shoreline Master Program is the keystone to creating a regulatory framework that ensures the wise management of our natural resources within the shoreline environment. It must guide future development along shorelines of the state in a balanced manner that emphasizes protecting and supporting shoreline natural resources that support our economic base.

While the county encourages development activities along the shoreline, avoidance of impacts to water quality and habitat is essential. Activities such as dredging, dredge disposal areas, and utility infrastructure, need to complement, not damage, shoreline ecological function. On the other hand, active management of the natural environment, such as the control of burrowing shrimp that affect commercial shellfish beds, is important to retain as well.
Protect Our Water Dependent Shoreline Jobs

From shellfish farms to fishing, the shoreline provides the backbone to Pacific County’s economy. The Shoreline Master Program needs to promote, maintain, and strengthen its natural resources so that it continues to support the Pacific County water-dependent employment base.

With Pacific County ranking as the fourth most fishing-intensive local economy (by share of total earnings) in the US, the protection of offshore fishing grounds in the Pacific Ocean is a critical path for the Shoreline Master Program to follow. Likewise, Willapa Bay now produces more oysters than any single bay in the US. The Shoreline Master Program should lead to increased employment opportunities within these industries.

Preserve Our Shoreline Heritage

The freshwater and marine shorelines of Pacific County are the central focal point of our heritage. Along these shorelines, Chinook Indians and non-native settlers created a vibrant history with its unique economic, social, and cultural institutions that persist strongly to this day. It is essential that the Shoreline Master Program acknowledge this historical context and preserve those structures and uses that created it.

We encourage all citizens to participate in the continuation of this history by engaging in an understanding of its shorelines and engaging in the vigorous and amiable debate that will preserve it.

### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustain &amp; Protect Restoration of Native Ecology</th>
<th>Protect &amp; Preserve our Existing Sustainable Uses</th>
<th>Having a Plan &amp; being Prepared</th>
<th>Manage Public Access that Protects/ Educates Private Property Rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan for sea level rise &amp; other ocean changes i.e. acidification, groundwater influence</td>
<td>Maintain pleasing aesthetics that promote our quality of life</td>
<td>Protect &amp; enhance the 4th most seafood dependent community in the nation</td>
<td>Have a plan &amp; be prepared for a natural disaster, i.e. get CERT trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for impacts of sea level rise</td>
<td>Best available science</td>
<td>Productive and sustainable fishing fleets, finfish &amp; crab</td>
<td>Preserve &amp; protect Willapa Estuary as most productive working estuary in nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replenish &amp; reintroduce native species</td>
<td>All class A,B,C weeds removed</td>
<td>Protect &amp; maintain wildlife areas</td>
<td>Maintain or improve H₂O quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls/benchmarks carrying capacity for iconic wildlife</td>
<td>Coastal sediment rights-direct beach placement not on fishing grounds</td>
<td>Continue to promote good clean water quality in our waterways through responsible &amp; reasonable practices</td>
<td>No net loss of ag in Pacific County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All fish barriers removed; esp. DOT</td>
<td>Define in real terms the actual threats, biologic &amp; economic, that are impacting Willapa Bay’s overall productivity</td>
<td>Continue harvest production &amp; protection of our natural resources</td>
<td>Protect &amp; preserve existing sustainable uses i.e. fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate non-native species Japonica</td>
<td>Dune management human safety is top concern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Administration of SMP</td>
<td>Maximize our SMP Jurisdictional Scope/Interface &amp; Keep it Simple</td>
<td>Wise Management of our Resources</td>
<td>Protect our Water Dependent Shoreline Jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure grandfathering exemptions have limits</td>
<td>An SMP that stands on its own – Keep it Simple (KISS)</td>
<td>Access for utility infrastructure</td>
<td>Maintain &amp; strengthen existing water “dependent” limits for shoreline &amp; overwater uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop county capability for SMP enforcement &amp; oversight</td>
<td>SMP’s extend out to fishing ground or continental shelf (i.e. 200 miles)</td>
<td>Stop development of impervious surfaces near our waterways</td>
<td>Promote job stability to ensure water dependent family well being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund SMP mandate</td>
<td>No renewable or nonrenewable power in or on the water</td>
<td>Maintain shoreline infrastructure &amp; dredging &amp; disposal area’s</td>
<td>Keep our water dependent &amp; fisheries jobs growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective septic oversight</td>
<td>Must update CAO. CAO &amp; SMP closely tied together</td>
<td>Control burrowing shrimp</td>
<td>More shellfish farming ground opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SMP does “not” allow “guidelines” to override the needs of Pacific County</td>
<td>Protect shorelines from development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balance development &amp; protecting environment</td>
<td>Encourage development while protecting critical areas &amp; existing sustainable uses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>