



IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 28, 2012

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## **State of Washington establishes ocean acidification panel**

SEATTLE -- Washington has become the first state in the nation to create a panel to address the increasing acidity of its marine waters. The blue ribbon group of scientists and leaders from government, tribes, the shellfish industry and conservation organizations, created by Gov. Christine Gregoire, will hold its first meeting on Friday, March 30 in Seattle and aims to release a final report by fall 2012.

The idea for a state panel on ocean acidification emerged from a November symposium in Seattle sponsored by Washington Sea Grant. Taylor Shellfish Policy and Communications Director Bill Dewey underlined the urgency of the challenge: "If we don't begin addressing ocean acidification promptly, the future of shellfish farming and the entire seafood industry is at stake. All our efforts at marine conservation and resource management will prove inadequate if we don't tackle the most basic problem of all—our acidifying marine waters."

Brad Warren, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership's Director of Ocean Health, proposed creation of the panel. Shellfish producers, tribal leaders, and the governor swiftly endorsed the plan. The panel is co-chaired by former EPA administrator William Ruckleshaus and Jay Manning of the Cascadia Law Group, the former director of the state's Department of Ecology. For a full list of members, the group's charter, and other information, see <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/water/marine/oceanacidification.html>.

Since 2007, the Global Ocean Health Program (<http://www.sustainablefish.org/global-programs/global-ocean-health>) has worked to help the seafood industry and associated communities address ocean acidification by providing actionable intelligence on relevant science and policy, advice on options to reduce risks to production, and support for monitoring changes in seawater chemistry in order to protect supplies.

"Acidification is a big problem, but the oyster industry has shown we can do a lot to understand its impacts and reduce them. We can also cut the waste streams that cause these changes," says Warren. This blue ribbon panel can address ocean acidification in Washington and serve as a model for how other states can do the same."