West Coast Ocean Science Action Agenda
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the West Coast Ocean Science Action Agenda?
The West Coast Ocean Science Action Agenda is a collaborative effort among state agencies, federal agencies, Tribes, academic institutions, and research institutions to identify shared ocean and coastal science priorities across California, Oregon, and Washington. It will define the research, monitoring, infrastructure, and workforce investments needed to advance those priorities.

What problem is the Action Agenda intended to solve?
California, Oregon, and Washington face many of the same ocean and coastal challenges including changing ocean conditions, harmful algal blooms, shifting fisheries, coastal erosion, and more. The Action Agenda represents a recognition of the need for the U.S. West Coast to speak with one voice on ocean science needs to make a stronger collective case for investment and action.

What kinds of science needs or priorities are within the scope of the Action Agenda?
The Action Agenda will consider both the science questions facing the West Coast and the capacity needed to answer them. This includes research, long-term monitoring and observing systems, data collection and access, decision-support tools, infrastructure, workforce development, and the institutional capacity needed to sustain and use ocean science for effective management, stewardship, and policy decisions.

Has this been done before?
Yes, in other parts of the country. Here are two examples:

- The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan, which seeks to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the largest system of fresh surface water in the world. The initiative recently developed the 4th iteration of their action plan.
- The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative, which studies the impacts of an oil spill on the environment and public health in the Gulf of Mexico.

Why is an Action Agenda needed when many science plans already exist?
The Action Agenda is designed to build on existing plans. By looking across these plans and identifying where priorities overlap, the West Coast can make a stronger case for science investments that serve multiple jurisdictions, communities, and management needs. The goal is to elevate opportunities where investment can generate benefits across the region and ensure limited resources are directed toward science with the greatest collective value.

How will priorities be identified?
The Action Agenda will draw on several forms of evidence, including publicly expressed science needs and priorities, in-person convenings held across the West Coast, and criteria developed with the Advisory Committee and project partners.

Why begin with existing plans and strategies?
Much of the work to identify ocean and coastal science needs has already been done. Agencies, Tribes, and regional bodies have invested time and expertise in developing plans that reflect their responsibilities and the needs of the people and resources they serve. Beginning with these plans provides a strong foundation in publicly articulated needs so that the Action Agenda can focus on identifying shared priorities amongst them.

What role will regional convenings play?
Regional convenings will provide an opportunity to validate, add context to, and expand on priorities identified in existing plans, including emerging needs that may not yet be formally documented. Centering these conversations in specific places will allow the Action Agenda to reflect the distinct needs found across the West Coast. These convenings will also strengthen relationships between the agencies, Tribes, and research institutions who will play an important role in carrying out implementation of the Action Agenda in the future.

How will Tribal perspectives be incorporated into the Action Agenda?
Tribal perspectives will be incorporated into the through direct, in-person engagement. Tribes are invited to identify the ocean and coastal research priorities/needs most important to them. These contributions may draw from Indigenous knowledge, scientific research, lived experience or any other form of knowledge or expertise a Tribe chooses to share. This approach creates space for Tribal priorities to be expressed on their own terms rather than interpreted solely through written material.

How will the project determine which science needs rise to the level of an Action Agenda priority?
Sharedness is a central consideration in determining which needs rise to the level of an Action Agenda priority. The project will consider whether a need appears across different types of institutions and sources, such as state, federal or Tribal; whether it is relevant across a substantial portion of the West Coast; and whether addressing it could create data, methods, tools, or infrastructure that can be used across jurisdictions.

Will the Action Agenda represent every ocean science need on the West Coast?
No. The Action Agenda will capture the needs identified through this process, but it will not be an exhaustive list of every ocean science need across the West Coast. The absence of a need from the Agenda does not mean that is unimportant or undeserving of support. This effort is intended to amplify a subset of priorities that cut across organizations, geographies, and interests so that additional financial resources can be directed towards opportunities with broad and lasting benefits.

Will contributors have an opportunity to review the Action Agenda?
Yes! Before the Action Agenda is finalized, partners in this process will have an opportunity to review the draft and provide feedback. Because the Action Agenda is being developed through collective participation, this review will help ensure that the final product accurately reflects the inputs received.

What will the final Action Agenda include?
The final Action Agenda will include the broader collection of ocean and coastal science needs and priorities collated through the Action Agenda process, along with a top-line set of priorities that are shared across the West Coast.

Who can use the Action Agenda?
The Action Agenda will be available for all partners to use in advancing the issues most important to their organization, community, or the West Coast as a whole. It can support planning, partnership development, and engagement with policymakers and funders by showing how an individual need connects to a wider regional priority.

How will the Ocean Science Trusts use the Action Agenda?
The Ocean Science Trusts have a mandate to mobilize resources on behalf of the scientific community and will use the Action Agenda to make the case for sustained investment in the needs identified through this process. The Trusts will also apply additional criteria – including current issue relevance, urgency, scalability, actionability, socioeconomic value, and the integration of equity principles– to identify a more focused set of opportunities for mobilizing investments. This work will help connect priority needs with potential public and private funders and implementation partners and support the sustainability of West Coast ocean and coastal resources.

What is the timeline for the Action Agenda?
Convening U.S. West Coast entities, engaging in listening sessions, fully compiling ocean and coastal science needs, and identifying crosscutting priorities is estimated to take 2-3 years. During that time, we'll be working with Congressional leaders, philanthropic interests, and others to invest in the creation of the agenda and build momentum and support for implementation beginning in 2028.