

Update to the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan Progression
This is a multi-phased project

Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: Phase 1 (2009-2012)

Supported initially by grant funds secured from the National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative (NERRS Science Collaborative), the first phase of the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds (PCW) was launched by South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (South Slough NERR) and the Coos Watershed Association (CoosWA) in 2009. The PCW was formed as a community collaborative among a broad representation of local public-and private-sector community members. Through a series of visioning exercises initially focused on the South Slough and Charleston area and based on the “triple-bottom line” philosophy of sustainability that explicitly considers community, economy, and environment effects in planning and development, PCW members considered what they wanted the project area to look like in 20 years and to articulate what aspects of our area’s quality of life, environment and economy were most valuable to them. A series of brainstorming and small work group sessions resulted in a 20-year Community Vision, a State of the Watersheds assessment, and an Action Plan to help chart a course to achieve the vision.

Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: Phase 2 (2012- present)

Supported again by grant funds secured from the NERRS Science Collaborative, PCW’s Phase 2 was initiated in 2012 with the goal of applying the lessons learned from PCW’s Phase 1 to a collaborative approach to addressing community needs in the Coos Bay area. The PCW, now with broader community representation, led by Don Ivy, chief of the Coquille Indian Tribe, and facilitated by South Slough NERR and CoosWA staff, agreed to focus on one of the long-standing issues that both local development and environmental protection interests had in common: the need to assist local governments to initiate, fund and collaboratively manage a long overdue revision of the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan (CBEMP). The PCW is facilitating the CBEMP revision in the phased projects described below.

Data Source Project

Working with the Coos County Planning Department, the PCW began the CBEMP revision process by creating an updated resource inventory for the CBEMP, known as the Communities, Lands and Waterways Data Source (Data Source). PCW members deemed updating the CBEMP resource inventory a priority due to the lack of current environmental and socio-economic data needed to revise the CBEMP. The Data Source is a comprehensive compilation and summarization of available status and trends data describing the environmental and socio-economic conditions in the Coos Bay area and consists of two parts: 1) Community (six chapters): socioeconomic status and trends; and 2) Lands and Waterways (eleven chapters): environmental status and trends. The Data Source will ultimately replace the majority of the CBEMP’s Volume II, Part 2 Inventories and Factual Base. This portion of the project took place between 2012 and 2015. It was during this time that PCW’s collaborative work was recognized by the State of Oregon with a Land Board Award (2013).

PCW Data Source Timeline

Project Task/Activity	2012		2013				2014				2015			
	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
Kick off meeting with PCW to define roles and explain goals of the project	█	█	█											
Meeting to identify all the data needs and sources for the data	█	█	█											
Established several subcommittees to work data and chapters	█	█	█											
Start Data Source with project outline of chapters	█	█	█											
Draft Data Source chapters and send them to the advisory group (PCW) for comments. Each meeting covering at least one chapter for smaller chapters meeting combined review. If there were changes to the chapter they were brought back for additional review			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█				
Technical Review Committee and external expert reviewer comments on all chapters				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
Work through design of document							█	█	█	█	█			
Develop grant proposals for additional funding to cover branding and design of Data Source											█			
Worked on Population and Demographics, Neighbors, and Schools to finish											█	█	█	█
Worked on final edits and presented final project to PCW												█	█	█

Coos County Audit: Phase 3 (2015- 2016)

Partnership for Coastal Watersheds: Phase 4 (2015- 2016)

Coos Bay Goal 16 Estuary Management Plan Assessment

The intent of Goal 16 is to recognize and protect the unique environmental, economic, and social values of estuaries and associated wetlands and requires affected local governments to develop comprehensive estuary management plans and programs. Coos County’s Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan (CBEMP) was initially developed, adopted, and acknowledged in the mid-1980s and has not undergone a comprehensive review since then. Once the PCW’s development of a new resource inventory for the Coos estuary (Data Source) was nearing completion, the Coos County Planning Department initiated a process to update the CBEMP (Volume II of the Coos County Comprehensive Plan). As an initial step, Coos County worked with the PCW to develop a preliminary assessment of the CBEMP’s usability, and document structure, and alignment with current land use laws, case law to inform and guide the comprehensive process required to update the CBEMP. This portion of the project took place between July 1, 2015 and December 31, 2016. Updates on the progress of this project were presented to PCW through the monthly meetings.

The report is organized around the three themes: (1) legal framework; (2) usability; and (3) document structure and includes an overview of what was broadly identified as challenges and opportunities surrounding the CBEMP update process, an in-depth consideration of each of the three research themes, and recommendations for the CBEMP update process. This allowed the County to understand the different plan options and consider potential priorities.

Coos Bay Goal 16 Estuary Management Plan Assessment Timeline

Project Task/Activity	2015		2016			
	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
Kick off meeting with PCW to define roles and explain goals of the project						
Reviewed existing plan and compare to other estuary management plans						
Convened 10 community stakeholder meetings Jan – to Feb 2016						
Include stakeholder interviews into audit March to April 2016						
Work through the draft document to include Analysis April -May 2016						
Present Draft to PCW for comments May 2016						
Present draft project to Board of Commissioners, post of County Website and request comments May 2016 through June 2016						
Finalize the study and provide to the County the final product July 2016 through December 2016						

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The PCW acquired new and updated policy information necessary to revise the estuary management plan through several levels of public engagement: focus groups, targeted outreach, and a public open house.

Targeted Outreach: Members of PCW held various public outreach events to give project updates. The outreach included local organizations and entities to maintain transparency and receive feedback from the community. Audiences included city councils, county commissioners, planning commissions, tribal councils and staff, boards of commissioners, watershed association, development councils, invasive species councils, chamber of commerce, community organizations including rotary club, and professional meetings for the Pacific Estuarine Research Society and Oregon Coastal Planners Network Meeting) to name a few.

Focus Groups: Three focus groups composed of experts were formed to develop a vision for the future of the estuary related to updating the estuary management plan, and to provide insight to how lands within the plan could benefit by updated designations. Local experts were assigned to one of three focus groups depending on their area of expertise: Economic Development, Natural Resource Protection and Restoration, or Socio-cultural Interests. Participants from each group committed to four meetings (one full-day and three partial days). All participants convened together at the first meeting to learn about the project, the current status of the estuary plan, and statewide planning process with a focus on the goals that the estuary plan is based on. At that meeting, desired outcomes and rules of engagement were established. The first meeting established a common foundation between the groups. Groups were integrated and asked a set of questions related to natural resources, economics, socio-cultural interests, and regulatory topics (for full description of process, see Land Analysis Report under Resources). At the second and third set of meetings each group was presented with a set of questions specific to each focus group's area of expertise. The refined answers were developed into recommendations for a plan update. These recommendations were reviewed during the final meeting that all participants attended, and then finalized based on their feedback.

Open House: A public open house was organized to solicit feedback from the broader community and test legitimacy of project results. A survey was developed to gauge how open house participants felt about the status of the current plan, which area of interest they most associated with (i.e., natural resource protection, economic development, socio-cultural interests), and how well they agreed with the focus group recommendations. The open house began with presentations on who the PCW is, statewide planning goals, and status and limitations of the existing Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan. Information stations were set up to provide greater detail on the Communities, Lands & Waterways: Data Source, Coos Estuary Map Atlas, assessment of the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, and the focus group recommendations.

Modernizing the Plan and Identifying Updates

Create an integrative assessment, for local governments to obtain necessary information to modernize and revise their estuary management plan. As the sixth largest estuary on the US west coast, the Coos estuary is one of Oregon's most valuable estuarine resources, both in its abundance, diversity, and quality of natural resources and in its economic and cultural values. However, modern management of the estuary and surrounding shorelands is based on the economic and social drivers of the 1970's era within which local land use plans were developed. The community agrees that current land use regulations need to evolve to reflect today's economic and social drivers while proactively addressing environmental changes and protecting natural resources. This portion of the project took place between November 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019. The products from this time frame consisted of:

- Recommendation for moving forward
- Digitizing maps
- Draft amendments.
- Estuary Guide and
- Lessons Learned Guide

Phase #6 – Decision on First Phase of Adoption

The Planning Commission met June 5, 2019 and the Board of Commissioners on June 6, 2019 at the Coos Bay Library to go through the first phase of updates to the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan and Implementing Ordinance. This was a joint work session with the City of North Bend and Coos Bay to review the recommended changes. The Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan is a shared plan and a joint public work session was the most efficient way to cover the recommended revisions from the University of Oregon, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement team. Moving forward with updates is the responsibility of each jurisdiction but the desired outcome is to have a management plan that remains goal compliant, easy to use and updated. After the meetings the option that was chosen was the partial revision to allow for consistency between all three jurisdictions.

The finalized products were provided to the County in December of 2019. Early in 2020 COVID restrictions went into effect causing some logistical issues with meetings and the Board of County Commissioners decided to hold off on public meeting on this very important issue until public meetings could be held. This caused a delay in the process. Staff reached out to the Department of Land Conservation and Development in 2022 to see if there was assistance to help with the adoption process.

In the fall of 2022 DLCD entered into an agreement with University of Oregon, Institute for Policy Research and Engagement team to move the project forward. This was to move forward the 2019 efforts. A press release was made at the beginning of December 2023 outlining the public meetings. The plan was to move the products from draft form to formal hearings and adoptions to have a unified plan. The findings and products were presented to Councilors, Planning Commissioners and Board of Commissioners in an informational work session setting. The work sessions took place in the Coos Bay City Council Chambers (500 Central Avenue, Coos Bay, OR 97420). The Planning Commissioners meeting took place on January 4, 2023 at 5:00 pm, followed by the City of Coos Bay and North Bend City Councilors and Board of Commissioners at 6:30 pm. A separate public house was held on January 7, 2023 from 1 to 4 pm at the North Bend Community Center, 2222 Broadway North Bend, OR 97459, to allow any additional public comment on the products. After the meetings it was determined that other public outreach should be considered.

Partner agencies (local, state, and federal, including tribal governments) were provided an opportunity for comment for 30 days through February 27, 2023. The maps were displayed at Southwestern Oregon Community College in February of 2023 to allow additional comments to be presented. A presentation was made before the CTCLUSI Tribal Council on April 20, 2023. An additional open house was held on May 10, 2023 prior to the County Board of Commissioners work session to make the official motion to move the project forward. Public comment was received through May 26, 2023.

Time line for phase one adoption:

Project Task/Activity	2023		
	May-June	July-August	September -October
Board of Commissioners Work Session			
Post Acknowledgment Plan Amendment			
Planning Commission Hearing and Recommendations			
City Council Hearings			
Board of Commissioner Hearings			
Adoption			
Appeal Deadline			

Future Phases – 2024 through 2028

The future phases will depend on funding available and will likely take four to six years to complete. This requires a ground truthing and possible rezoning based on the changes to inventories. County and City Staff will continue to work through this effort via the PCW.