

## Washington's Coastal Hazards Resilience Network

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The Washington Coastal Program developed a strong regional partnership that supports vulnerable communities by advising local planners and connecting them to tools for disaster response and recovery.

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Bluff erosion destroys a house on Washaway Beach.

Washaway Beach lives up to its name. On the edge of a misty bay in southwest Washington, Washaway Beach residents experience the most rapid erosion on the U.S. Pacific coast. For the past century, the shoreline has eroded an average of 100 feet per year. In recent decades, erosion has destroyed over 20 homes, other private property, and part of the Willapa Bay Wildlife Refuge. Farther north in Ocean Shores, severe winter storms are eating away a peninsula protected by 100-year-old jetties. Despite repeated emergency repairs, houses and public facilities continue to sustain damage. All along the coast of Washington, which is home to 4.6 million people, hazards such as erosion, storm surge, and flooding affect both the built

and natural environment. The impact of coastal hazards is expected to grow with sea-level rise, threatening critical systems that support Washington's economy and well-being.

Washington has a rich history of progressive policies that promote balanced shoreline management. However, the state's diverse programs were not optimized to help local planners develop long-term strategies for coastal hazards. Recognizing the need for better coordination among the state's coastal practitioners, Washington's Coastal Management Program and Washington Sea Grant took initiative through a NOAA CRest Grant to develop the Coastal Hazards Resilience Network (Network). The Washington Coastal Program and Washington Sea Grant have worked in partnership since 2013, developing the Network to focus on Washington's critical need for multi-hazard planning, preparedness, response, and recovery. The Network brings together key experts in coastal hazard management for Washington's marine shorelines. This multidisciplinary group now includes over 50 members from state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. Through strong collaboration, they work together to improve regional coordination and make Washington's coastal communities more resilient to natural hazards.

Information sharing is one of the Network's primary functions, advanced through meetings and online resources such as a website, e-mail list, and regularly updated social media platforms. Among the many benefits to members, increased communication has resulted in greater awareness and discussion about existing projects, transfer of technical knowledge, identification of statewide priorities, and partnerships on funding opportunities that leverage expertise and resources. Due to effective leadership, the Network has become an important point of contact for anyone interested in coastal resilience issues. "The Coastal Hazards Resilience Network provides the forum for practitioners to coordinate and collectively improve state programs, strengthening assistance to coastal communities in Washington State," said Bobbak Talebi, Coastal Program Planner and Co-Manager of the Network.

The Network actively supports local communities by collecting and distributing technical information, helping local planners incorporate best management practices, and facilitating greater awareness of coastal hazards. The Coastal Program's role as Network coordinator is critical in this effort to put planning into action. While communities desire to prepare for coastal hazards, they lack the specialized knowledge and financial resources. The Network bridges that gap by helping communities understand their options for shoreline management and obtain the funding to pursue projects. Ocean Shores and North Cove, which is located along Washaway Beach, were two of the first communities to receive direct assistance from the Network and are actively on their way to becoming more resilient.