



**Oregon Shores**  
Conservation Coalition

July 6, 2023

To: City of Coos Bay Planning Commission  
Chelsea Schnabel, Coos Bay Planning Administrator

Re: Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, Phase 1

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Phase 1 of the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan (CBEMP) update, regarding the draft plan update elements that have been presented to Coos County as well as the cities of Coos Bay and North Bend and are now being considered for adoption.

Much of the Phase 1 process focused on necessary technicalities. As we noted during the public comment period, these updates were badly needed, and by the end of this Phase 1 process, the CBEMP will be a more functional document for *interim* use. Diligent work on the part of the planners has gone into removing outdated language and improving the plan's usability. We have concerns about the maps when it comes to their use over time, but what has been done to update and improve the maps constitutes a valuable *initial* step. The draft plan update has greatly improved during the course of its public review, and we commend the planners for their responsiveness to public input.

As our emphasis in the above paragraph indicates, while we have some specific concerns, we consider the Phase 1 draft plan update to be a good *beginning*. But it is only a first step toward achieving a comprehensive plan for the estuary's long-term future. The value of Phase 1 is strictly contingent on continuation of the EMP planning process to Phase 2.

There are three basic policy objectives related to a future Phase 2 which should be established in the Phase 1 update, and have not yet been adequately addressed:

1. Specific guidelines for developing a broadly representative Citizen Advisory Committee to shepherd the Phase 2 process.
2. Immediate establishment of a Technical Committee that will assist with the ongoing need to update data, identify gaps, and improve mapping.
3. A clear mandate to continue with Phase 2 in timely fashion.

With regard to the last point, IPRE’s “Revisions Memo” notes that the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds firmly recommended a full plan revision in 2019 and describes the current Phase 1 update as “foundational” for Phase 2, clearly indicating, as we have stated, that a Phase 2 is implicit in the scope of work on Phase 1. We urge that the commitment be made an explicit part of Phase 1 as adopted. The Revisions Memo suggests that Phase 2 might begin sometime in 2024-2026. We recommend a commitment to start early in that span of time.

Following are our suggestions for language to incorporate in the adopted Phase 1 updates to ensure that these fundamental objectives are achieved.

## Citizen Advisory Committee

### Suggested Language<sup>1</sup>

#### Subsection 1.5: Introduction: Citizen Involvement Program

After the final sentence of the subsection, “A joint CBEMP Steering Committee will be appointed to facilitate coordination of ongoing maintenance and updating of the multi-jurisdictional Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan,” insert:

**A dedicated Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) will be appointed to provide input and feedback to the Steering Committee during the decision-making process.**

#### Subsection 2.4: Policies for Future Processes: Citizen Involvement

Beginning with the third sentence of the second paragraph of the subsection, the following revisions should be made:

A joint CBEMP Steering Committee comprised of **official** representatives ~~from~~**of** Coos County, City of Coos Bay, City of North Bend, local Tribes, and the Port shall aid the Planning staffs in the direction of revising the CBEMP and its Implementing Ordinances, ~~as well as to~~. **A dedicated Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of representatives of community and stakeholder groups shall provide input and feedback to the Steering Committee during the decision-making process. The Steering Committee shall** voice concerns, **including concerns raised by the CAC,** and/or support revisions and updates of the plan and implementing ordinances, which are initiated by the Planning Department(s) staff, prior to public hearings and determinations at the Planning Commission and City Council/Board of Commissioners level. **It is the duty of the Steering Committee to ensure the input of the CAC is thoroughly and meaningfully incorporated into their recommendations to Planning staff.** ~~This~~ **It is neither** committee’s function ~~will not include~~ **to review** applications submitted by property owners and/or their agents.

A joint CBEMP Steering Committee shall be appointed to facilitate coordination of ongoing maintenance to the multi-jurisdictional Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan. This steering committee may consist of nine (9) or more members. Membership shall be as follows: one (1) member from the city of Coos Bay Planning Commission (appointed

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, added text is indicated in **bold**, and removed text is indicated with a ~~strike through~~.

by Coos Bay City Council); one (1) member from the city of North Bend Planning Commission (appointed by North Bend City Council); one (1) member from the Coos County Planning Commission (appointed by the Coos County Board of Commissioners); one (1) member from the Port Authority (appointed by the Port Commission); and two (2) members from the local Tribes (one (1) appointed by the Coquille Indian Tribal Council and one (1) appointed by the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians Tribal Council); and at least three (3) interested citizens (one (1) each appointed by the Coos County Board of Commissioners, Coos Bay City Council, and North Bend City Council).

**It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to ensure that the CAC seats are filled initially and as necessitated by vacancy throughout CBEMP Phase II and during any future Plan revisions. Appointment shall be by application in addition to any other means selected by the Steering Committee.**

**The CBEMP Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) will be comprised of: At least two (2) tribal members, one (1) each from the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and the Coquille Indian Tribe; at least one (1) Spanish-speaking member of the Hispanic/Latino community; three (3) citizens at large, one (1) from Coos County, one (1) from City of Coos Bay, and one (1) from City of North Bend, but not employed by or otherwise with formal ties to those local governments; and; at least one (1) member of each of the following stakeholder groups:**

- a. The fishing industry, both recreational and commercial;**
- b. The seafood industry, including aquaculture and seafood processing;**
- c. General local businesses;**
- d. Tourism industry or commercial recreation businesses;**
- e. Recreational interests;**
- f. The scientific community and natural resource managers (at least one, but preferably several with different areas of expertise, such as estuarine ecology, wildlife or resource management, wildlife biology, environmental science, and water quality/chemistry); and**
- g. The conservation/environmental community (at least one, but preferably one from a local organization and one from a statewide group).**

**Where it is not possible in good faith to fill one of the CAC seats, the Steering Committee shall appoint someone with similar interest and motivation to the listed party in developing the CBEMP.**

**The CAC shall be responsible for its own internal organization, creating and filling leadership positions within the Committee as needed.**

**The CAC shall convene at the request of DLCD or the local governments and may convene on its own initiative as agreed upon by the members through its chosen process.**

### **[Subsection 3.3: Policies, Policy #35: Plan Implementation](#)**

After Subpoint d. ("Recommendation of policy directives, based upon consideration of the County's social, economic, energy and environmental needs."), add:

In particular, as to the CBEMP and its ongoing maintenance, the CAC will serve as a means for ensuring citizen involvement, fulfilling the mandate of Goal 1, in considering and recommending policy directives, as above.

## Technical Committee

### [Suggested Language](#)

#### [Subsection 2.7: Policies for Future Processes, Technical Committee](#)

Under Section 2: Policies for Future Processes, Subsection 2.7: Technical Committee should be added. That subsection should read:

#### **2.7 Technical Committee**

**The Steering Committee described in Sections 1.5 and 2.4 shall appoint a Technical Committee to advise on the data underlying Plan maps as they are updated and improved, and on other scientific, policy, and technical considerations. It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to ensure that Technical Committee seats are filled initially and as necessitated by vacancy throughout CBEMP Phase II and during any future Plan revisions. It is also the responsibility of the Steering Committee to thoroughly and meaningfully incorporate the advice of the Technical Committee into their recommendations to Planning staff.**

The Technical Committee will be comprised of at least five (5) members with expertise in relevant scientific areas, for example estuarine ecology, marine spatial planning, GIS and mapping, natural resource management, wildlife and fisheries biology, climate science, and water quality/chemistry, and drawn from the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, Southwestern Oregon Community College, South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds, or other similar scientific and research institutions; tribal technical representatives, with expertise in traditional ecological knowledge or natural resource management, to be appointed by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and the Coquille Indian Tribe; and one (1) or more land use planning professionals. State and federal agency scientists from relevant agencies, such as DSL, ODFW, NOAA, DEQ, and EPA should also be considered for the Committee.

## Phase II

### [Suggested Language](#)

#### [Subsection 3.3: Policies, #36 Plan Update](#)

Before the first sentence of the subsection, insert:

**To ensure the comprehensiveness, adaptability, and long-range effectiveness of this Plan, after the adoption of this 2023 Phase I draft, the process of updating the CBEMP will be ongoing. Immediately following Phase I, the Steering Committee and Technical Committee shall be constituted. These committees shall begin work in the interim period, if any, between Phases I and II. In particular, the Technical**

**Committee shall work on updating the maps and data underlying the CBMEP and identify any gaps in knowledge.**

**Key elements not addressed during Phase I that will be addressed during Phase II are, but are not limited to: ongoing Plan review and adaptability; climate resilience and mitigation; restoration and reconnection of the estuary to its historical footprint; integration of planning considerations under Goal 16 with those of other Goals (notably Goal 17, addressing shorelands, but also Goal 5, for wetlands, trails, and other features, Goal 7, Coastal Hazards, and others); water quality; endangered species; carbon sequestration; and habitat loss.**

**Also during Phase II, the following plan sections will be updated: Management Units, which will be re-evaluated with new resource data; Plan for Dredge Materials Disposal; and the Mitigation and Restoration Plan. Further, the Steering Committee will work to develop a detailed methodology for the comprehensive Plan review outlined below and a specific protocol for monitoring plan success, re-evaluating, and regularly updating components.**

**The Steering Committee will ensure these elements and any concerns raised by either the CAC or Technical Committee are adequately addressed by the end of Phase II.**

Paragraphs one through five of the same subsection should be edited as follows:

As necessary, or at minimum every ten (10) years, Coos County, City of Coos Bay, and City of North Bend shall: a) conduct a comprehensive review of this Plan, including inventory and factual base and implementing measures to determine if any revision is needed; b) base its review upon reexamination of data, problems, and issues, **in consultation with the Technical Committee**; c) issue a public statement as to whether any revision is needed; d) coordinate with other jurisdictions which are included within the Coos Bay Estuary and its shorelands; and e) incorporate input from the **CAC and from the public at large** ~~input~~ into its decision.

This strategy is based on the recognition that ~~a formal~~ **comprehensive** review is necessary to keep this Plan current with local situations and events which may change from over time and reduce the Plan's ability to effectively and appropriately guide ~~growth~~ **management and conservation** of the Coos Bay Estuary and its shorelands **for decades to come, especially in the face of climate change, development pressures, and population increases.**

A comprehensive review and update of this Plan shall include review and amendment, as necessary, of policies and management unit implementing measures contained in this plan to reflect changing environmental, social, cultural, and economic circumstances within the estuary. As part of this update, maps used for regulatory plan review shall be reviewed and updated with best available scientific data to the greatest extent possible, **and relevant management strategies and tools, such as climate and sea level rise adaptation guides, developed by DLCD, NOAA, and other state and federal government agencies shall be consulted** . **This shall include but not be limited to consultation with the Technical Committee described in Section 2.7.**

This review shall include extensive engagement with stakeholders and the community. This shall include but not be limited to ~~the development of a~~ **consultation with the**

~~eCitizen aAdvisory eCommittee made up of representatives from key interest groups and the public at large described in Section 2.4. whose aim is to represent the interests of the community, and a technical advisory committee made up of related subject matter experts to review scientific data.~~

The CBEMP that ultimately emerges from Phase 2, to guide management and conservation of the estuary for decades to come in the face of climate change, development pressures, and population increases, must be truly adaptive, which is to say, must contain within itself the method for continuous updating. To be adaptive, the CBEMP must contain a specific protocol for monitoring plan success, re-evaluating, and regularly updating components.

While we recognize that technically an EMP deals with the estuary, per se, estuaries do not exist without their watersheds, so Coos County should mesh the EMP with planning for the full watershed.

We urge that the CBEMP Phase 1 draft include a strong commitment to continuing the EMP planning process with Phase 2, and add to this a forceful recommendation that a true citizen advisory committee be established, along with a technical committee. It should also mandate that planners engage the public at every step of future planning, collaborating with community groups on educating the involving the public and reaching out to every segment within the watershed's population. The Phase 1 plan should also recommend that the county and cities develop partnerships with community and statewide groups in seeking funding and in-kind contributions of expertise and organizing capacity to make possible the multi-year, in-depth process needed to engage the community in creating a comprehensive, adaptive plan for the Coos Bay estuary's future.

Sincerely, Phillip Johnson, Conservation Director  
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On behalf of the Oregon Shores board and staff