

Cantwell Applauds Ocean Shores Tsunami Debris Meeting

Local News

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OCEAN SHORES, Wash. - Yesterday U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) issued the following statement regarding the

I applaud regional stakeholders for coming together today to forge ahead on local tsunami debris cleanup strategies, this coordinated initiative is a step in the right direction in protecting Washington state's coastal communities and economy. - U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

On March 30th in Seattle, Cantwell and Senator Mark Begich (D-AK) [called on President Obama](#) to allocate emergency resources to mobilize National Science Foundation research to help track and respond to tsunami debris. Expediting NSF grants would help Washington coastal communities get more specific estimates of what might hit shores – and when.

On March 7th, Cantwell [urged](#) the head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to step up programs to analyze the potential danger of tsunami debris. During an Oceans, Fisheries, Coast Guard, and Atmosphere Subcommittee hearing, Cantwell questioned NOAA head Dr. Jane Lubchenco on the agency's readiness to address the tsunami debris poses to Washington state's coastal economy. President Obama's FY13 budget proposes a 25 percent cut to NOAA's Marine Debris Program. Last November, Cantwell [secured](#) Senate Commerce Committee passage of an amendment to address the threat approaching tsunami debris poses to economies up and down Washington's coastline. Cantwell's amendment would identify the debris as a unique threat and require the Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere to develop an interagency action plan to help prepare our region for this potentially serious problem. Cantwell continues to fight to ensure a plan is in place to address the threat tsunami debris poses to Washington state's coastal economy. The state's coastal economy supports 165,000 jobs and produces \$10.8 billion in economic activity each year. After a devastating earthquake and tsunami struck Japan on March 11, 2011, an enormous amount of debris was washed out to sea. One year later, very little is known about the composition or trajectory of the debris, and there is currently no federal plan in place to address a large-scale marine debris event such as the approaching tsunami debris. The complete text of the letter sent today to the participants at the Ocean Shores event follows: *April 25, 2012 Dear fellow Washingtonians: I applaud regional stakeholders for coming together today to forge ahead on local tsunami debris cleanup strategies. This coordinated initiative is a step in the right direction in protecting Washington state's coastal communities and economy. I regret that I cannot be with you today. But please know that I am making it a priority in the U.S. Senate to ensure that coastal communities have more data and better science to track and respond to the approaching debris. We can't wait until tsunami debris washes ashore to come up with a plan to address it. Hundreds of thousands of jobs in Washington state depend on our healthy marine ecosystems and coastal communities. That's why I've also introduced and secured committee passage of an amendment that would require the development of an interagency plan to help prepare our region for this potentially serious problem. And I joined Alaska Senator Mark Begich in calling for additional research to ensure that Washingtonians get specific estimates of what might hit our shores – and when. Just last*

month, we marked the one-year anniversary of the tragic earthquake and tsunami in Japan that killed thousands and sent an enormous amount of debris out to sea. One year later, our local agencies need additional tools and resources in order to protect Washington state's \$10.8 billion dollar coastal economy. I will continue working to ensure we have an aggressive plan in place to protect Washington coastal communities and jobs. Thank you. Sincerely, Maria Cantwell