

# Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972



*"The primary successes of coastal protection laws would be things we DON'T see – public access not lost, wetlands not filled, scenic views not spoiled, new subdivisions not approved, agricultural lands not converted, ugly development not built, etc."*

*-- Peter Douglas, Coastal Conservation Pioneer and former Executive Director, California Coastal Commission*

## The Coastal Zone Management Act: A History of Enhancing Our Coasts and Our Lives

As a result of the 1969 Stratton Commission's ocean policy recommendations, the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) was established by Congress on October 27, 1972, to preserve, protect, develop, enhance, and restore the nation's coastal resources. This year (2012) marks the 40th anniversary of this landmark act which has proven to be one of America's best tools to safeguard our coastal areas.

Under the CZMA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), through its Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), works with state partners to balance economic development and environmental conservation, ensuring future generations have access to, and enjoyment of, our nation's nearly 100,000 miles of shoreline.

Importantly, the CZMA also created two cornerstone national programs to better understand and manage our coastal areas:

the **National Coastal Zone Management Program** and the **National Estuarine Research Reserve System**.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the past forty years, OCRM has partnered with 35 coastal and Great Lakes states and territories to address critical coastal issues. OCRM has invested over \$1 billion in federal funds, matched by state funding, to develop and implement 35 state coastal management programs and establish and run 28 estuarine research reserves which preserve more than 1.3 million acres of coastal habitat. The CZMA federal-state partnership has increased public access to our coasts, protected and restored coastal habitat, and minimized the risk of coastal communities to coastal hazards. It has also helped coastal communities manage development to promote healthy economies and people, and reduced polluted runoff, resulting in safe, swimmable, and fishable coastal waters.



## IMPORTANCE OF AMERICA'S COASTS

America's economic and environmental prosperity is directly linked to the health and vitality of our coasts. Although our coastal counties are less than half of the nation's landmass, they support an overwhelming majority of its people, development, and economic activity. It is estimated that by 2025, nearly 75 percent of the U.S. population, over 250 million people, will live within 50 miles of the coast.

The U.S. coastal zone supports valuable coastal and ocean resources, including fisheries, marine mammals, minerals, oil and gas, and other energy resources. It is also valued for marine transportation, tourism, recreation, and military operations. America's coastal regions are economic engines that provide for 40 percent of all U.S. jobs and provide over \$214 billion annually in leisure and hospitality jobs, according to the National Ocean Economics Program.

## THE NATIONAL COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The National Coastal Zone Management Program is an innovative, voluntary federal-state partnership that protects, restores, and responsibly develops our nation's diverse coastal communities and resources. The program takes a comprehensive approach to problem solving,

balancing the often competing demands of coastal resource use, economic development, and conservation, to support healthy coastal economies and ecosystems. By leveraging federal and state matching funds, the program strengthens the capabilities of each partner to address coastal issues of national importance while giving states the flexibility to design a program that acknowledges their unique priorities and needs. The federal consistency provision in the CZMA is a cornerstone of the National Coastal Zone Management Program and provides states with an important tool to manage coastal uses and resources and to facilitate cooperation and coordination with federal agencies.

The majority of coastal states joined this voluntary program in its very early stages. In 1976 and 1977, Washington and Oregon (respectively) became the first states to establish federally-approved coastal management programs under the CZMA. By 1979, 19 states, covering 69% of the nation's shoreline, had approved programs and by 1986, 29 states and territories had joined, representing 90% of the coastline. Today, 34 of the 35 eligible coastal and Great Lakes states and territories are participating. While Alaska was part of the National Coastal Zone Management Program for nearly 32 years, the state statute authorizing its participation was allowed to sunset in 2011. Illinois is the most recent state to join, receiving approval of its coastal management program in January 2012.





## **NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM**

Estuaries are coastal bays or sloughs where fresh water from rivers meets the salty water of the ocean. Estuaries are rich and complex ecosystems that serve as nurseries to ocean life and act as buffers to protect coastal areas from excessive storm damage.

Recognizing the importance of estuaries, the CZMA called for the establishment of a national system of estuarine sanctuaries (later named estuarine research reserves) protected for purposes of long-term research, public awareness, and education. The first sanctuary designated was South Slough, a 4,400-acre arm of Coos Bay in southern Oregon, in 1974. By 1980, the estuarine sanctuary system encompassed more than 360,000 acres on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf Coasts, as well as the estuarine-like areas of the Great Lakes coasts. The system grew to its current number of 28 reserves, protecting more than 1.3 million acres of estuarine land and waters along our ocean and Great Lakes coasts.

Stretching from Alaska to Puerto Rico, each reserve is a unique, place-based “living laboratory” where dedicated staffs conduct research and monitoring, resource stewardship, as well as public education, and outreach activities. Over the last 15 years, federal investment of over \$85 million has resulted in greater conservation through the acquisition of properties near reserves and the construction of

state-of-the-art research and education facilities, including three LEED certified reserve centers. Through integrated research and education, the reserves assist communities to effectively address resource management issues.

## **PRESERVING OUR COASTAL LANDS**

The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) was established in 2002 to provide additional protection for coastal and estuarine lands considered important for their ecological, conservation, recreational, historical, or aesthetic values. The program provides state and local governments with matching funds to purchase or place conservation easements on significant coastal and estuarine lands.

## **BUILDING ON THE CZMA TO SOLVE COASTAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

While the core CZMA federal-state partnerships were addressing many important coastal issues, coastal decision-makers needed additional science, decision-support tools, and other services to help them make the most informed decisions. To lend further support to the CZMA, NOAA developed several new programs and efforts. In the late 1990's, NOAA established the Coastal Services Center to work nationwide to provide coastal resource decision-makers with new technologies and data as well as innovative tools, training, and services to reduce the adverse impacts of storms on life, property, and the economy and to maintain the health of the environment in coastal areas. To provide coastal managers with the scientific knowledge and data





to help them balance environmental, economic, and social goals, NOAA formed the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science in 1999.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System, using its system-wide monitoring program and research expertise at sites around the nation's coasts, has begun to develop sentinel sites for monitoring the rise in sea level and climate change impacts on critical estuary and coastal habitats. This data, collected over time, gives coastal managers the science-based information they need to help develop plans and make critical decisions to safeguard coastal communities and environmentally sensitive areas.

The Smart Growth Partnership, which provides a framework for assisting communities in managing growth and development to yield better economic, environmental, community, and public health results, emerged in 1996 from collaboration among NOAA's OCRM, Coastal Services Center, the National Sea Grant College Program, and EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities. Through the partnership, the agencies work together to assist coastal and waterfront communities in becoming sustainable and resilient, while protecting healthy coastal ecosystems, restoring degraded coastal ecosystems, and adapting to climate change.

## OUR COASTAL FUTURE

In 1972, the CZMA began a new era in the United States by recognizing the importance of stewardship of our nation's coasts, estuaries, and oceans. The programs, policies, innovative decision-support tools, and scientific study that followed have led to wise use of our coastal lands and waters. The forward-thinking planning carried out under the CZMA has supported vibrant coastal economies, protected human and ecosystem health, and preserved coastal character.

Our nation faces a variety of growing coastal challenges every day—from helping communities prepare for devastating storms and sea level rise, to balancing multiple ocean uses, including offshore energy development, to ensuring the public has access to our nation's beaches and waterways. Addressing these challenges requires thoughtful and balanced coastal management decisions based on sound scientific research. To ensure our coasts continue to be productive and enjoyable places that benefit the nation, ongoing support for the CZMA from coastal stakeholders and their representatives in Washington, D.C., is vital. America's future depends on healthy and resilient coasts. The CZMA remains the best tool to safeguard our coastal communities and economies now and in the future.



This timeline of 40 years of CZMA milestones represents only the **year** programs were authorized, not the month. However, programs are shown in correct order of acceptance:



State/Territory CZMP [1 - 35] & NERRS [1 - 28]

