

**Program Managers Meeting  
Coastal Programs Programmatic Session  
312 Program Evaluations: Developing Performance Goals  
for Increased Accountability  
February 25, 2009**

Below is a summary of the discussion for the 312 Program Evaluation session.

The recent GAO audit of CZMA programs resulted in the following recommendation related to Section 312 program evaluations: To strengthen NOAA's periodic evaluations of state coastal management programs, we recommend that NOAA take the following action: establish performance goals so that evaluators have criteria for evaluating state coastal programs.

To address that specific recommendation and to strengthen the Section 312 evaluation process in general, OCRM wants to work with state coastal programs to establish a framework and approach to develop some program-specific measures and targets to be used in future evaluations. A reauthorized CZMA will certainly include language on evaluations and reporting on measurable goals and objectives (this accountability theme is recurring in several places). This effort to provide site specific targets will be the first step toward these efforts.

As an example to start people thinking about this effort, a framework for a coastal program could (but would not have to) use some existing goals and performance measures from the CZMA Performance Measurement System that best reflect the program's current emphasis and focus. A coastal program would develop a minimum of three performance measures and associates targets that cover a minimum of three years. By February 2011, the annual funding guidance and/or performance progress reporting guidance from OCRM will require site level targets for at least three performance measures. A program's Section 312 evaluation will then review progress toward meeting those targets.

Coastal program managers and staff discussion and comments reflected several concerns and thoughts:

- coastal programs do not have control over the outcomes of many of the measures in the national performance measurement system—other partners or other state agencies are responsible—so the use of national performance measures in a 312 evaluation would be problematic;
- quantitative measures do not easily address or measure the quality of life issues that are important to coastal residents;
- performance measures that are chosen should truly reflect what the specific coastal program does and emphasizes;
- this new effort will result in increased paperwork;
- this effort may require additional resources or increase pressure on existing resources and staff;
- how are or will a variety of initiatives like Section 309 strategies and assessments, performance measures, 312 evaluations, and this new effort be integrated? how do these different initiatives 'map' to the larger picture?

- could OCRM put together a ‘flowchart’ for all of the various initiatives—how everything fits together, what are the responsibilities of the coastal management programs, deadlines, etc.?
- how does OCRM use the national performance measurement system now? OCRM should think critically about how these new measures will help OCRM and the programs;
- how will we tell the qualitative and quantitative picture?
- ● why not use the Section 309 process as the framework for this new effort rather than the performance measurement system?

NPED staff reiterated that the development of some measures and targets will be program specific and will not be used to compare one program to another. These measures and targets will supplement and not supplant the existing evaluation process. These are designed to be informative, not determinative in a Section 312 evaluation.

Donna Wieting noted that OCRM needs to do a better job of providing feedback on how we use information the coastal programs provide. We hear and understand that the coastal programs have a lot of tasks, assignments, and responsibilities to provide information coming at them and that OCRM needs to paint a picture of how all the informational requirements and CZMA processes link to each other.