LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The coasts and oceans of the U.S. are popular places – to live, to work, and to play. Their popularity relies on a vast array of coastal and ocean resources including safe and clean beaches for recreation, healthy and expansive wetlands and coral reefs for storm protection, secure and vibrant ports for commerce, and marine protected areas that sustain ocean and coastal life. As coastal communities grow and change, these areas must be effectively managed to maintain a balance between the use and protection of resources for ecological, economic, and social benefits.

We recognize that the complex but vital management of coastal and ocean resources requires strong commitment and sustained partnerships between federal, state, tribal, and local governments, universities, industries, and non-governmental organizations. Using a comprehensive approach on an ecosystem scale, the NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) works through key partnership programs to address the complex management issues facing the U.S. coasts and oceans.

We have designed this strategic plan to clearly communicate OCRM priorities and to guide OCRM activities over the next five years. The mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in this document were established to highlight OCRM cross-program priorities and to facilitate cooperative support of our partners. The plan bridges the broad programmatic mandates contained in the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the Marine Protected Area Executive Order, and the Coral Reef Conservation Act and the specific strategic objectives established by each OCRM program.

As a living document, we will update this plan periodically to best reflect OCRM priorities and strategies. The next update will incorporate the recommendations from the Coastal Zone Management visioning effort on how to strengthen the CZMA and the national coastal management program. To ensure the goals and objectives are fulfilled through the hard work of OCRM staff and partners, we will use the strategic plan to guide the development of office annual operating plans and employ evaluation tools to assess progress and inform updates.

Recognizing that our success relies on continued commitment by OCRM staff and continued collaboration with OCRM partners, we encourage feedback and input on our strategic plan to ensure that our expertise and tools are used to their utmost capacity to address coastal and ocean management priorities. We remain dedicated to our partnerships and open to new opportunities to move toward a vision shared by many – healthy coasts and ocean ecosystems that we can use and enjoy now and in the future.

David M. Kennedy

Director
Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

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OCRM Programs

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) provides national leadership, strategic direction, and assistance to state and territory coastal management programs, estuarine research reserves, and other U.S. and international partners to sustain healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems. OCRM works with coastal resource managers in the states and territories, together with federal agencies, tribes, and other groups to improve scientifically based, comprehensive resource management. OCRM's work is mandated through by the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Marine Protected Area Executive Order, and the Coral Reef Conservation Act. It is responsible for the following programs:

Coastal Zone Management Program

The National Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP), authorized by the Coastal Zone Management Act, is a partnership between the federal government and 34 of the 35 U.S. coastal and Great Lake states and territories. The CZMP strives to protect, develop, and restore the natural and cultural resources of coastal areas by balancing competing uses of, and impacts to, these resources.

National Estuarine Research Reserve System

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), established by the Coastal Zone Management Act, is a network of 27 estuarine areas representing different biogeographic regions across the U.S. These estuaries are protected for long-term research, monitoring, education, and stewardship.

National Marine Protected Areas Center

The National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center works with the U.S. Department of the Interior, states, and other partners to develop a national system of MPAs to conserve the nation's natural resources and cultural heritage. Established by Presidential Executive Order 13158, the Center uses science, technology, and training to support the nation's MPAs.

Coral Reef Conservation Program

The Coral Reef Conservation Program supports effective management and sound science to protect and sustain coral reef ecosystems. Mandated by the Coral Reef Conservation Act, the cross-NOAA program brings together expertise from many NOAA offices, state and territory governments, academia, international organizations, and other partners for a multidisciplinary approach to managing and understanding coral reef ecosystems.

Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) provides funding to protect lands in to coastal and estuarine areas that are valuable for ecological, conservation, recreational, historical, or aesthetic values.

Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology

The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) is a partnership between NOAA and the University

of New Hampshire. Through funding pro¬grams and partnerships, the Institute supports technology development and demonstration that address coastal management priorities such as restoration and land-use planning, nonpoint source pollution, harmful algal blooms, nutrient enrichment, and toxic contamination.

While each program within OCRM individually serves key roles in coastal and ocean management, collectively, they coordinate with each other, enhance one another's work, and provide NOAA's partners with a wealth of expertise. This plan recognizes the programs' common objectives, and suggests ways that OCRM can operate as a stronger "whole" to carry out its mission and best serve its partners.

Roles of OCRM

OCRM supports NOAA's mission through partnerships with federal, state, territorial, tribal and local government agencies, regional and international institutions, other nations, universities, nongovernmental organizations, and coastal- and ocean-related industries. OCRM contributes to three of NOAA's principal goals, which are to:

- protect, restore, and manage coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management
- serve society's needs for information about weather and water
- support the nation's commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.

OCRM programs offer unique opportunities within the National Ocean Service (NOS) and NOAA because they are largely carried out through partnerships. These partnerships combine federal expertise and resources with local knowledge and practices for a comprehensive approach to coastal and ocean management. OCRM helps transfer the capabilities of NOS, NOAA, and other federal agency partners to coastal and ocean resource managers, and communicates managers' needs back to NOAA and federal partners to improve management tools and technologies. OCRM also coordinates with its partners to evaluate and improve federal and state programs and plays a lead role in developing national policy direction.

OCRM leads the management and protection of coastal and ocean resources in a number of ways, including:

- **Partnerships:** OCRM brings federal, regional, state, local, international, and nongovernmental partners together to direct knowledge, technical capacity, and financial resources to important coastal and ocean issues. OCRM contributes to its partners' success by providing technical assistance, training, information, tools and science, and by administering federal funds to address local, state, regional, and national priorities.

- **Education, Outreach, and Participation:** OCRM provides both formal and informal education and technical assistance on coastal and ocean ecosystems, resources, and management issues to students, decision-makers, and the general public. OCRM also encourages participation and involvement from all sectors of society that have a stake in coastal and ocean resource management.

- **Communications:** OCRM works with internal and external stakeholders to deliver important coastal management messages to target audiences and serves as liaison between NOAA and state and local programs.

- **Regional Integration:** OCRM plays a critical role in resolving complex ocean and coastal resource management problems that depend on effective regional cooperation. OCRM supports regional integration by participating in regional ocean governance initiatives, developing regional resource management options, implementing regional science and resource protection programs, and supporting regional meetings and information networks.

- **Ecosystem Approaches to Management:** OCRM fosters an ecosystem approach to management by bringing partners together to identify common ecological and socioeconomic goals and to incorporate ecosystem principles within coastal and ocean resource management programs. OCRM supports ecosystem science, develops and applies management tools that address both natural and social sciences, and delivers NOAA products and services to resource managers.

- **Science:** OCRM conducts and supports rigorous research and monitoring. OCRM also works with its partners to make the results of scientific research available to people addressing coastal and ocean resource issues.

Core Values

OCRM commits to organizational excellence by:

- Maximizing fiscal responsibility through the efficient administration of federal funds to address local, state, regional, and national priorities.

- Maintaining the highest quality standards for its products and services.

- Providing a safe and secure work environment.

- Investing in staff, including training and professional opportunities.

- Maximizing staff expertise and creativity through team work and collaboration.

- Serving the needs of NOAA and the coastal management community by expanding its own technological capabilities.

Vision

People use, enjoy, and protect healthy oceans and coastal ecosystems now and in the future

Mission

To lead the Nation's efforts to manage and conserve ocean and coastal resources

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: HEALTHY COASTAL AND OCEAN RESOURCES

Protect and restore coastal and ocean resources to sustain ecological functions, cultural heritage, and social and economic benefits.

Estuaries, coastal wetlands, sea grass beds, mangrove and kelp forests, and coral reefs and other coastal and ocean ecosystems provide significant ecological, cultural, and economic benefits to communities and the nation. As focal points for development, transportation, and commerce throughout history, the nation's oceans and coasts have contributed to economic growth and to a rich cultural history, ranging from shipwrecks and Native American middens to today's vibrant, unique coastal communities. In addition to providing economic and cultural value, coastal and ocean areas provide ecosystem services such as filtering polluted runoff, reducing the impacts of storms on coastal areas, offering recreational opportunities, and providing mineral and energy sources. They are also valuable spawning grounds and nurseries, and provide food for fish, shellfish, and other wildlife.

To maintain the important products, services, and benefits of coastal and ocean resources, people need to manage the negative impacts of their activities on these areas. Population growth, changes in how and where people want to live, increasing and competing demands for resources, and climate change are examples of pressures on the coasts and oceans. They can result in habitat loss, pollution, and changes in biological communities which, in

turn, have negative impacts on people's livelihood and quality of life.

As an example, the National Coastal Condition Report (2005) states that approximately 13,210 acres of coastal wetlands were lost during the 10-year period from 1990-2000. These habitat losses have serious social and economic impacts on the communities that are dependent on them. The Status of Coral Reefs of the World (2004) estimates that 20% of the world's coral reefs have been effectively lost and another 24% are under imminent threat of collapse. In the Caribbean, the continued degradation of coral reefs and the resulting loss of recreation, storm protection, and fishing may result in estimated economic losses to local communities of $3.1 to $4.5 million per year by the year 2015. Changes in climate also contribute to habitat loss by altering the ecological balance and increasing the vulnerability of coastal communities to rising sea levels, wetlands flooding, and degraded coral reefs. Statistics like these prompted coastal managers to identify habitat change as one of the most important management topics in 2004.

OCRM provides the tools, technologies, and information needed to protect and restore coastal and ocean resources, including working with partners to conduct the ecological and socioeconomic research needed to inform and support management decisions. For example, the Marine Protected Areas Center works with partners to enhance the ability of MPAs to effectively protect marine habitats and resources, as well as identifying gaps in protection. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program also provides funds to state and local governments to acquire coastal and estuarine lands that have been identified as a priority for protection.

Objectives

1.1. Increase the acreage of coastal and ocean habitats acquired or designated for long-term protection.

Strategies:

- Provide funding and technical assistance to protect habitats through new marine and coastal protected areas, including National Estuarine Research Reserves and areas managed under Special Area Management Plans.

- Coordinate with state and local governments to identify and protect habitats threatened by alteration.

- Provide funding to state and local governments to purchase lands and conservation easements for long-term protection of habitats.

- Coordinate regional, national, and international activities among existing marine protected areas and identify areas for future designation.

1.2. Expand science and monitoring to improve people's understanding of the extent, condition, and functions of coastal and ocean resources, and their response to natural and human impacts.

Strategies:

- Provide assistance and foster partnerships that characterize coastal and ocean resources as a baseline for tracking change, conducting research, and guiding protection, restoration, and management efforts.

- Conduct and synthesize research on the natural and social science needed to effectively manage coastal and ocean resources.

- Provide funding and technical assistance to expand the spatial and temporal coverage and parameters of physical, biological, and socioeconomic monitoring in coastal and ocean areas.

- Transfer coastal and ocean monitoring technologies and methodologies between researchers, within regions, and internationally.

- Incorporate OCRM-supported coastal and ocean monitoring data into the Integrated Ocean Observing System and collaborate on data delivery efforts.

- Partner within NOAA and with states and federal agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations to address priority research needs (e.g. climate change impacts) identified by coastal and ocean resource managers.

1.3. Deliver resources, tools, and information to assess, protect, and restore coastal and ocean resources.

Strategies:

- Increase the delivery of research, monitoring, technologies, and real-time observation data to scientists and end users through workshops, presentations, websites, scientific publications, and other mechanisms.

- Evaluate effective examples of coastal and ocean resource protection and restoration, and share success stories and lessons learned.

- Distribute technical and policy guidance through OCRM and NOAA websites, meetings, workshops, and publications.

- Provide funding and technical assistance to protect natural and cultural resources.

- Provide training and technical assistance to improve resource management and protected area practices, addressing issues such as: invasive species, water quality, habitat restoration, habitat mapping, site networking, human impacts, enforcement, and the effectiveness of protected areas.

- Support state governments in strengthening policies to reduce and mitigate impacts of coastal development and other human activities on natural and cultural resources.

GOAL 2: RESILIENT COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Foster resilient coastal communities that value and sustain healthy oceans and coasts.

Coastal communities are essential components of a strong national economy, with coastal watershed counties supporting almost half of the U.S. national economy. To maintain robust economic activities and healthy ecosystems, coastal communities must be resilient - able to adapt to and recover from specific events or the cumulative impacts of long-term changes. Significant economic sectors linked to the health and vitality of coastal areas include ports and shipping, commercial and recreational fishing, and tourism. The U.S. marine transportation system moves more than two billion tons of domestic and international freight annually, with waterborne cargo contributing more than $742 billion to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Coastal states also earn 85 percent of all U.S. tourism revenues, with beaches serving as the leading tourist destination in the country. Coastal communities attract numerous people who are drawn to a quality of life that is strongly linked to accessible natural and cultural resources.

As a result of people's attraction to the coasts, these areas face a growing number of threats due to competition for space and the increasing use of both natural and cultural resources. Population density along the U.S. coasts is five times greater than that of the rest of the nation. Seven million more people are projected to move into coastal areas by 2008, and 12 million more by 2015. Coastal water quality is being degraded by polluted runoff, which raises public health concerns and impacts fisheries and tourism. Cultural resources, public access, and coastal-dependent uses are being threatened by poorly planned development in many areas. As the coasts become more crowded, more people and infrastructure are placed in harm's way by natural and human-induced hazards ranging from storm events, such as hurricanes, to more chronic threats, such as sea level rise. In the face of these pressures, coastal communities need better planning and management to ensure their long-term vitality and resiliency.

OCRM provides policy direction, information, tools, and financial assistance needed to build strong coastal communities. OCRM cooperates

with other federal programs to assist coastal states in a balancing among often competing uses of the coast. The Coastal Zone Management Program works with states to encourage well-planned development, funds projects to improve public access to the coast, and provides seed money for redevelopment of underutilized ports or waterfronts. The Coastal Zone Management Program also provides national leadership on the Federal Consistency provision of the CZMA. This provision ensures that the actions, licenses, permits, and financial assistance of federal agencies conform with federally approved state coastal policies. The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology develops and demonstrates new technologies to detect and control coastal pollution. OCRM also helps coastal communities establish and enhance protected areas with economic and environmental value.

Objectives

2.1. Improve the health and safety of coastal communities by promoting sustainable land use and best management practices, including those that address natural and manmade hazards.

Strategies:

- Provide information, technical assistance, and policy tools to coastal communities to promote incorporation of scientific and socioeconomic information into planning and management decisions.
- Provide policy guidance and technical assistance on federal consistency to resolve conflicts about coastal use due to federal actions, permits and licenses, and funding.
- Support coastal communities in conducting hazard preparedness, mitigation, and post-hazard planning.
- Increase public awareness of coastal hazards and actions the public can take to reduce loss of life and property.
- Contribute to the development of a NOAA coastal natural hazard policy capability to conduct policy research and exert greater influence on federal policy.
- Provide funding for research, development, and adoption of pollution control technologies and practices.
- Educate resource managers about best management practices to reduce the negative effects of land based pollution.
- Build partnerships and support resource managers as they prepare for and adapt to the impacts of changes in climate.

2.2. Promote planning across diverse sectors (e.g., MPAs, energy, transportation, aquaculture, commercial and recreational fisheries) to reduce conflicts between users and protect ocean resources.

Strategies:

- Provide information, technical assistance, and policy tools to improve the capacity of ocean managers to incorporate scientific and socioeconomic information into ocean planning and management decisions to reduce user conflicts and protect ocean resources.

- Support ocean planning by funding relevant research and development of information, tools, and technologies.

- Coordinate state and federal ocean managers, through federal consistency or other processes, to minimize and resolve conflicts in ocean uses.

- Develop a national system of marine protected areas to highlight the location, function, and governance of these areas and their importance to ocean conservation.

2.3. Improve public access to the coasts and oceans.

Strategies:

- Support the conservation and enjoyment of natural, cultural, and historic resources.

- Provide funding to state and local governments to evaluate public access needs.

- Provide funding to state governments to acquire new sites for recreational access and to add or improve facilities at existing public access sites.

- Support state policies to maintain existing or create new public access sites as a component of coastal development.

- Provide funding and technical assistance to protected areas to manage public access and resource protection.

2.4. Redevelop port and waterfront areas to increase their contribution to the national economy, giving top consideration to uses that depend on coastal access.

Strategies:

- Provide funding, guidance, and technical assistance to coastal communities to promote the redevelopment of deteriorating or underutilized ports and waterfronts.
- Support coastal states' efforts to maintain or update policies that prioritize the redevelopment of port or waterfront areas.
- Work with federal agencies, states, local governments, and the private sector to minimize the impact of waterfront facilities on ocean resources.

GOAL 3: INVOLVED COASTAL CITIZENS

Improve people's ability and motivation to take actions that benefit coastal communities and ecosystems.

The health and economic value of coastal and ocean ecosystems depend upon individual and collective decisions to minimize human impacts. Governments, communities, businesses, organizations, and individuals need to make informed choices about conservation, restoration, pollution reduction, land use planning, and waterfront development.

OCRM supports coastal residents' efforts to be good environmental stewards by sharing best practices among coastal decision-makers, delivering science and technical tools to managers, and raising students' and teachers' understanding of coastal and estuarine ecosystems. OCRM also provides opportunities for the public to participate in decision making and volunteer to conserve and restore coastal and ocean ecosystems. Through OCRM support, thousands of coastal residents help restore habitat, clean up marine debris, and monitor water quality. For example, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) provides hands-on education experiences to thousands of students and teachers each year, and the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) provides technical assistance and grants to states and territories for public opinion research and outreach programs. The CRCP and NERRS also sponsor fellowships to train future scientists and coastal managers - the NERRS Graduate Research Fellowship and post-graduate Coral Reef Management Fellowship.

Objectives

3.1. Improve coastal and ocean literacy and motivate individuals and groups to take actions that benefit coastal communities and ecosystems.

Strategies:

- Provide educational opportunities that increase student and citizen literacy of coastal and ocean ecosystems and improve their capacity to use technology to understand the environment.
- Implement programs and events to raise public awareness and understanding about the importance of conserving coastal and ocean habitats and the impacts of human activities on those habitats.
- Increase opportunities for volunteers to restore and monitor coastal and ocean resources.
- Increase opportunities for coastal and ocean stakeholders to engage in research and monitoring to build stewardship and tap local and traditional knowledge.
- Translate and integrate data from earth observation systems into educational materials and outreach products and support opportunities for students, teachers, and communities to use technologies to access coastal and ocean information.
- Develop and deliver education programs based on OCRM-generated science and data to students, teachers, and citizens and align K-12 educational materials with national and state science standards.
- Partner with NOS and NOAA to deliver data and research to coastal communities.

3.2 Strengthen the scientific basis of decision-making on coastal and ocean resources through informed public involvement and outreach and professional training programs.

Strategies:

- Deliver science-based training and technical assistance to coastal and ocean managers to improve communication, public education, and social marketing techniques to foster public support and involvement.
- Identify effective decision support tools and models to help people assess the impact of personal and professional actions on coastal and ocean resources.
- Expand opportunities for public participation in decision making about coastal and ocean management.

MEASURING PROGRESS AND MOVING FORWARD

Careful planning, evaluation, and adaptation are needed to manage and protect coastal and ocean resources over the long-term. This strategic plan is an important first step in identifying and communicating the priorities of OCRM for the next five years. It serves as the guiding document for development of an office operating plan each year to highlight specific tasks that will move OCRM toward its goals. To measure progress toward its goals and objectives and inform adjustments to its strategic direction over time, OCRM employs several evaluation tools:

- Performance Measures - Each OCRM program uses performance measures to determine the success of its efforts. Performance measures allow OCRM to identify priority issues, track trends in resources and communities, quantify the effectiveness of management activities, and clarify existing and emerging resource needs to improve management. OCRM will use performance measures as one way to evaluate its progress toward strategic goals and to inform revisions in strategic direction and program priorities.

- Program Evaluations - OCRM performs regular evaluations of state Coastal Zone Management Programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves to ensure effective program implementation. A performance evaluation component is also being designed into the National System of Marine Protected Areas. These evaluations help OCRM identify emerging management issues and needs, adjust program priorities, leverage resources, and build partnerships.

- Program Reviews - OCRM periodically uses external program reviews to independently assess program effectiveness and to make recommendations for future direction and priorities. The Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology recently underwent a program review, and the Coral Reef Conservation Program will undergo an external review in the near future. These reviews help programs ensure that they are moving toward their goals, as well as supporting OCRM and NOAA strategic priorities.

- Policy Reviews - OCRM evaluates national policies that influence coastal and ocean management in an effort to adapt current legislation and regulations to reflect changing conditions. OCRM is currently leading a partnership effort to develop a vision for the future of coastal management, including identifying specific options for drafting a proposal to reauthorize the CZMA.

These evaluation mechanisms provide OCRM with valuable feedback from our partners on how we are progressing toward our goals and objectives. Information obtained from these evaluation tools will inform future updates of this strategic plan so that it reflects priority issues and addresses emerging management needs.

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management is committed to achieving the goals and objectives of this strategic plan. To ensure that we succeed, we will encourage innovation and adapt our management efforts as necessary. Because we rely on valuable partnerships to implement our programs, we will keep in mind that different situations may require different solutions, and we will remain flexible and inclusive in determining how to achieve our goals.

To provide feedback or discuss partnership opportunities, please contact:

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Notes