

Healthy Oceans Depend On Healthy Coasts

Being a global commons, the affects of local activities on the health of our oceans is not always immediately apparent. Healthy oceans depend on healthy coasts. Coastal rivers and estuaries are the arteries of the ocean, providing the mix of fresh and salt water and unique habitat essential to marine life.

Over 3/4 of shellfish and marine commercial species depend on coastal habitats during some stage of their life cycle. Thirty-five percent of rare and endangered species depend on coastal habitats for survival. Yet, these habitats are being increasingly degraded.



Rivers and estuaries are also pipelines to the ocean. Even if you live far away from the ocean, pollutants and trash we all generate can still reach the ocean by being washed into streams and storm drains. Despite the enormity of ocean waters, toxics and other pollutants impact the marine environment.

Pollutants take many forms and have many sources. In addition to industrial, stormwater and sewage outfalls, pollutants come from nonpoint sources such as automobiles, fertilizers, and pesticides. Trash, such as plastic bags and discarded fishing line can also be harmful to marine mammals, sea turtles and marine birds.



Ocean Management Begins at the Shore

Beach closures ... fisheries collapsing ... toxic mud ... our coasts and oceans are in trouble.

So what is being done about it? Lots!

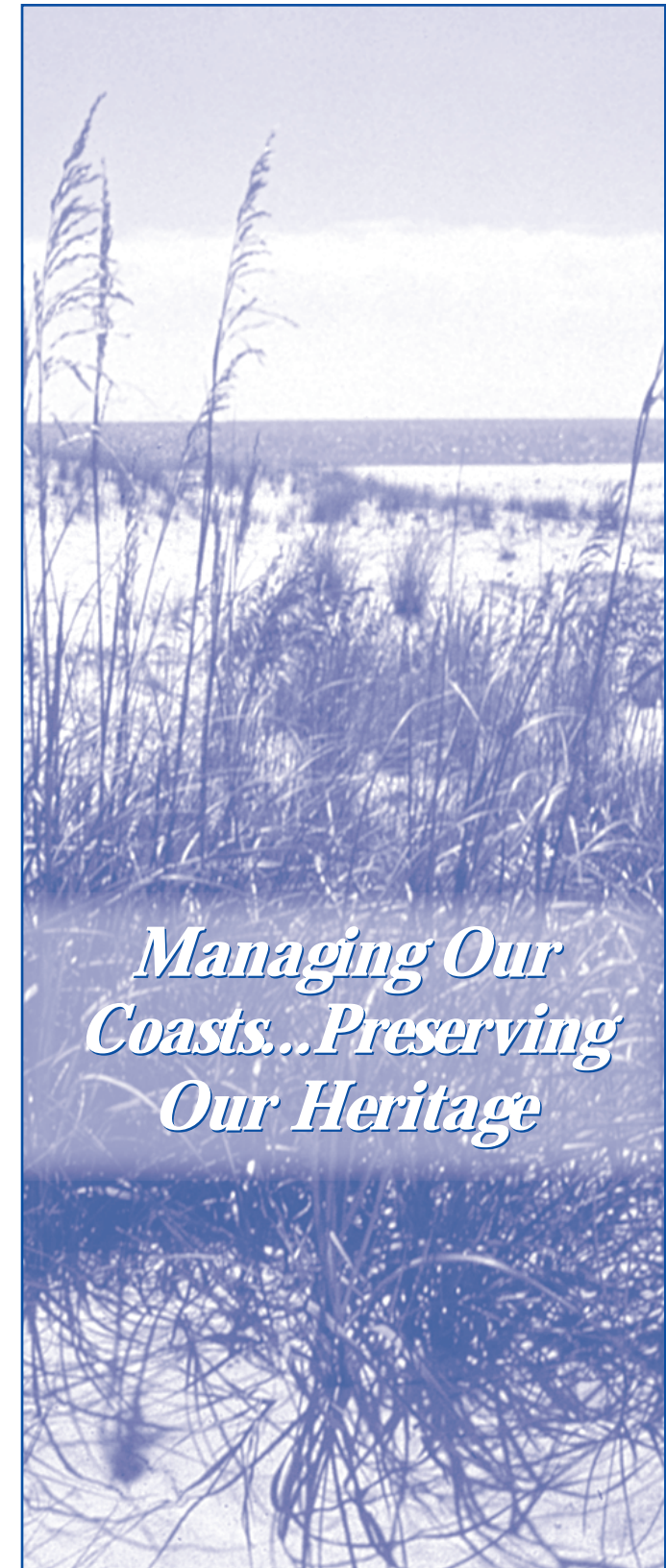
Since the 1970's, state and federal governments have enacted a variety of laws and programs to stem the decline of coastal and ocean resources. State and federal programs are protecting wetlands, restoring habitat, reducing pollution, preserving designated estuaries and marine areas, regulating ocean dumping, putting dredged material to beneficial use, restoring fisheries, and protecting marine mammals and other endangered wildlife. The success of these programs is beginning to be seen with improvements in water quality, revitalized habitat and the return of native species in abundance. But there is still much to be done.

We are all responsible for ensuring the health of our coasts and oceans. Striking a balance among the many competing uses of the coasts and oceans requires a collaborative and coordinated effort by the federal, state and local governments. Most important, it requires an educated and involved citizenry to protect and restore the health and sustainability of our nation's coasts and oceans.



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*Managing Our
Coasts...Preserving
Our Heritage*



For More Information:

To learn more about the many on-going activities to protect coastal and ocean resources, check out these websites:

Coastal America



The Coastal America Partnership was created to more effectively address coastal problems by combining the resources, expertise, and authorities of the federal natural resource, infrastructure, and military agencies with state, local, tribal, and non-governmental organizations. The Coastal America Partnership has also established a national network of Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers. The network combines the resources of regional educational centers of excellence with those of the federal partners to educate the public about the value of coastal resources. www.coastalamerica.gov

State Coastal Zone Management Programs

The Coastal Zone Management Act provides for management of the nation's coastal resources, including the Great Lakes, by balancing economic development with environmental preservation. Its goals are "to preserve, protect, develop, enhance, and restore, where possible, coastal resources." Under the CZMA, the states and the federal government have joined in a partnership to achieve this broad range of management objectives for the coasts. Comprehensive state CZM programs are striking a balance among the competing demands on coastal and ocean resources. www.nos.noaa.gov/ocrm/czm/czmpages.html

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



NOAA is working to restore and maintain fish stocks and protect marine mammals and threatened or endangered species, manage marine sanctuaries, work with states to manage estuarine reserves, and administer the national Coastal Zone Management Program. Also available on NOAA's website is a State of the Coast report and an opportunity to participate in a national dialogue on coastal stewardship. www.noaa.gov

U.S. Department of the Interior



DOI has a number of bureaus responsible for protecting and managing coastal resources. The Fish and Wildlife Service provides grants to coastal States for the acquisition, restoration, or enhancement of coastal wetlands and tidelands and implements conservation projects. The Minerals Management Service oversees development of marine mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf and is working with States to support beach nourishment and wetlands protection efforts. The National Park Service manages and protects more than 50 coastal parks. www.doi.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



EPA has broad responsibilities for improving water quality and aquatic habitat through programs to reduce and prevent pollution, manage dredged material, and to protect and restore wetlands, coral reefs, and estuaries of national significance. <http://www.epa.gov/water>

U.S. Department of Agriculture



USDA conservation programs are helping farmers and homeowners conserve, improve, and sustain our natural resources and environment. www.nrcs.usda.gov

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



The Corps is responsible for regulating the placement and transportation of dredged sediments and plays a key role in preserving and restoring coastal habitats associated with civil works water resources projects. www.usace.army.mil

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development



HUD Community Builders program and Brownsfields redevelopment projects are rejuvenating and restoring inner cities. www.hud.gov

U.S. Department of Transportation



Under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, the Federal Highway Administration operates programs to help improve air and water quality, restore wetlands and natural habitat, and rejuvenate urban areas through transportation redevelopment, increased transit and sustainable alternatives to urban sprawl. The U.S. Coast Guard responds to oil spills and stranded marine mammals, enforces vessel pollution regulations and educates the public about protecting the marine environment. www.dot.gov

U.S. Department of Energy



DOE sponsors energy conservation and alternative energy programs to reduce the demand for new hydropower sources. home.doe.gov

U.S. Department of Defense



DOD, including the Military Services – the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy – supports coastal protection and restoration through a variety of programs. DOD's Legacy Resource Management Program emphasizes partnerships to protect and conserve natural and cultural resources. The Innovative Readiness Training program (IRT) allows military units to accomplish training requirements while carrying out projects that benefit the local community such as wetlands restoration or dam removal projects. The Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) supports basic and applied research and development of technologies that support defense-related environmental issues. www.denix.osd.mil

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