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A discussion paper prepared as part of a series of focus groups on the topic of the

# Increasing Involvement in and Awareness of Coastal Zone Management in New Jersey

scheduled for March 25 and 26, 2003

Prepared by the Urban Harbors Institute  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
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Among the requirements of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) for state coastal management programs are procedures for public participation and intergovernmental coordination in program development and implementation.

The CZMA was one of a number of environmental statutes passed by Congress in the early 1970s that made public participation a cornerstone of the program. Most government programs have since adopted this philosophy, and experience over the past several decades confirms the value of an engaged and educated constituency.

It is the stated policy of the CZMA to “encourage the participation and cooperation of the public, state and local governments, and interstate and other regional agencies, as well as of the Federal agencies having programs affecting the coastal zone” in state coastal management programs (§ 1452(4)). Further, §1455 of the CZMA specifically establishes as one of the bases for federal approval of a state coastal program that the public is provided the opportunity to participate in permitting processes, consistency determinations, and other similar decisions.

State coastal programs accomplish the above through a variety of mechanisms and activities. While each type of approach usually has a primary purpose, most are interrelated and mutually supporting. The following is a framework for presenting and discussing the variety of approaches for public participation and program coordination:

1. Public involvement: provide opportunities for citizens and/or organizations to be involved in the development or refinement of coastal policies, programs, and comment during regulatory and federal consistency reviews.
2. Coordination: increase coordination and collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental organizations whose missions and activities are complementary or related.
3. Public education: creating a more informed citizenry about the coastal environment and the activities and issues.
4. Program visibility: increasing awareness among citizens, governmental units and nongovernmental organizations of the program’s capabilities, initiatives, and accomplishments.

## 1. Public Involvement

Experience has shown that it is advantageous to involve the public throughout both the development and implementation of coastal programs. There are significant benefits to having the public participate in program development and assessment, policy formulation and refinement, regulatory revisions, and in formulating program initiatives. There are also points in the regulatory and rulemaking processes where the public has a legal right to participate and it is only reasonable that this be supported with timely and adequate notification and convenient ways for the public to exercise these rights.

It is common for coastal management programs to devote a significant amount of time and attention (and program funds) to actively supporting public involvement in program and policy development, implementation, and review. Only through public involvement can a program assure that its policies and objectives incorporate community and cultural values. This, in turn, will translate into increased and reliable support for the program and its objectives. By soliciting the opinions and participation of individuals affected by the policy process early on and throughout program implementation, a wider range of ideas, needs, and concerns will be incorporated in the program and support broadened.

A continuing mechanism for public involvement in ongoing program assessment can bring in fresh perspectives and opinions from the program's constituency. The public or members of constituency groups are often very effective in suggesting ways to address local coastal issues in particular. A consequence of continuing public involvement is that public interest in the program increases, a better understanding of its goals and purposes is reached, and the likelihood of opposition is reduced. One of the challenges of inviting and encouraging public participation throughout program refinement and implementation is to effectively manage the process so that a proper balance is maintained between the role of the public and the role of the responsible agency.

It is extremely helpful for the public to have access to guidelines and suggestions for effective participation. Many public agencies and programs issue user-friendly guidance to help the layperson better understand program amendment or regulatory processes and the specific opportunities for public involvement. This information might include guidance on what is and is not legitimate subject matter for a particular process or advice on how to prepare effective testimony. Also useful is printed or web-based information on on-going opportunities for becoming involved in program initiatives such as serving on working groups and advisory committees or participating in volunteer stewardship projects such as beach clean-ups and water quality monitoring programs. These types of guidelines, along with material designed to educate people on the coastal environment, help to ensure that policy makers receive valuable input and that the public feels it is capable of offering an educated opinion in a manner that allows them to be heard. Without this type of education and guidance from the start, effective public participation and support is difficult to achieve and sustain.

### *Techniques and Examples*

The following are general and proven tools that have been developed through several decades of experience by coastal and other resource management programs.

Provide timely, broad and effective notification of, and opportunities for the public and local government to participate in, coastal management decision making.

- Announcements or articles (in addition to legal notices) regarding a variety of program activities in local newspapers, and on websites (the program's as well as those of other interested organizations), are effective for providing up-to-date information as well as notice of meetings, public hearings and issues. These tend to be seen and read by more people than are legal notices and have the flexibility to address issues beyond the regulatory realm. This is one of the best ways to inform

the public of program initiatives and accomplishments and keep coastal zone management in the public's consciousness.

- Agency or organizational listservs reach a targeted audience very quickly.
- A centralized publication or website through which the public can find information on all aspects of coastal management, from program goals and structure, to a description of priority issues (coastal hazards, coastal development), to sources of data and maps, and notices of regulatory proceedings and decisions. A comprehensive set of links to other state, federal, and municipal agencies and organizations related to the coastal area make the site all the more valuable and will yield a greater number of visits.

As described above, applicants and the public find a guidebook providing both an overview and the specifics of CZM-related permitting processes helpful. These guides should be available for distribution to interested parties, at area libraries, and online. The guidebook should provide specifics on who makes what decisions, legal requirements of decisions, regulatory standards applicable to the review, how to participate (written comments, public hearing, timeframes for each).

Some states conduct regular workshops on becoming involved in program and regulatory processes, including effective public participation strategies.

A number of state coastal management programs have citizen advisory committees or similar bodies that play a central role in ongoing, general guidance and review of the coastal program. In most cases, these permanent advisory committees evolved from advisory groups utilized during the development phase of the program. The membership of these advisory committees is usually representative of the range of coastal constituencies and geographic areas, and their responsibilities may include program review, providing advice or feedback on new policy direction or program initiatives, priority setting, quality control, public outreach, and a liaison role. The ongoing assessment conducted by these types of groups allows for continuous public input as well as a method for considering the coastal program in its entirety – from vision statement to budget.

Many of these committees have been in place since the 1970s and 1980s when their respective coastal programs were first developed. Their longevity is an indication of the value they provide to the program. The success of advisory boards established for the earlier programs is recognized by states that have subsequently developed coastal programs. The newer programs have nearly always followed the pattern of setting up public advisory groups during the development phase of the coastal program and then transitioning these groups into citizen advisory committees during the active life of the program. These types of groups may represent the most efficient way to ensure dependable, consistent, informed, and meaningful public involvement in the program.

- In Minnesota, the Governor's Council on the Coastal Program was created with 15 members representing the geographic and ideological diversity of the North Shore. This Council seeks public input through regular needs assessment to assist in developing program priorities.
- Hawaii established the Marine and Coastal Zone Management Advisory Group (MACZMAG), an advisory body to the Hawaii CZM Program. MACZMAG, with 10 state officials, 4 county officials, 6 nongovernmental members, advises the Office of Planning regarding marine and coastal zone management planning, coordination, and facilitation of the functions of the program.
- The Massachusetts Coastal Resources Advisory Board is a statewide board, geographically representative, with members from business, educational institutions, local and federal agencies, regional groups, fishing industry, and interested citizens.

It meets regularly to provide advice and feedback on program initiatives, assists in setting priorities, participates in periodic reviews of the program, serves as a conduit and liaison for the general public, hosts regional meetings, and reviews the program's annual work program.

- In Maryland, a Coastal Resources Advisory Committee, created to bring wider representation to the existing Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Zone Advisory Commission, serves as a public forum for the coastal program. It also designs the project evaluation process, identifies coastal problems requiring further research and analytical studies for resolution, determines overall allocation of the program's technical and financial resources, conducts federal consistency reviews, and implements the Coastal Energy Impact Program.
- Additionally, in Maryland, local and regional committees have been established in the state's coastal jurisdictions to study coastal management issues and make recommendations. These committees help shape comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and local application of state and federal programs that affect land and water resources. Through these two levels of participation, the public has the opportunity to be involved with specific assessments and modifications of the program as a whole as well as with issues at the local level.
- The Coastal Resources Advisory Council in Ohio provides advice and recommendations; serves as an avenue for public input; and assures visibility of the program among those most affected. It holds open meetings in coastal counties and co-sponsors workshops.
- In Texas, regional subcommittees of the Coastal Coordination Council have been developed to represent citizens, local governments, and other interested parties in each coastal region. In addition to engaging with the public these subcommittees conduct ongoing evaluations of the program and contribute to the annual coastal program report.
- In South Carolina, Citizens County Working Groups have been established in each of the coastal counties. The purpose of these groups is to advise agency staff of any amendments that should be made to the coastal management plan, identify and offer solutions to problems which may arise as a result of implementing the management plan in their particular area, and assist in maintaining the Council's sensitivity to changing local values and concerns relating to old and new developments. In making recommendations for change through amendments to the coastal zone program, South Carolina's Citizens County Working Groups perhaps have a bit more flexibility than those states that work specifically through legislation or annual reports.
- In Florida, a State Coastal Resources Advisory Committee advised the Department of Environmental Resources and the Interagency Management Committee on the coastal management program. The committee was responsible for reviewing and recommending priorities concerning coastal issues, reviewed funding allocation priorities and technical assistance, reviewed and commented on DER rules related to coastal management, and suggested legislation necessary to better implement the coastal management program.

## **2. Coordination**

There is considerable value to be realized from coordinating and collaborating with other governmental units that exercise authorities or conduct programs in the coastal area and/or with nongovernmental organizations whose missions or interests complement the state coastal management program. Though New Jersey's coastal zone management program is not set-up to delegate its responsibilities and authorities to local governments or other entities, it can coordinate with and assist those agencies. The intergovernmental coordination referred to here is that which goes beyond the interrelationships of state and regional government agencies that form the basis of the approved coastal program.

There are numerous federal and state agencies carrying out programs and non-regulatory functions in the coastal area. There are also local and regional governments performing planning, program and regulatory responsibilities. A host of coastal and environmental advocacy groups, marine trades and similar organizations of coastal users that conduct activities in or affecting the coastal area, encourage and support public use, or provide information about the coastal environment. Collaboration and close coordination with such entities provides opportunities to extend the reach and expand the breadth of the coastal program. These are mutually beneficial arrangements allowing each organization to leverage its resources to accomplish more than could be done independently. Most initiatives with multiple partners are of higher quality, better received, and more effective.

In fact, coastal programs are in an ideal position to facilitate coordination among agencies and between levels of government because a coastal program's roles and responsibilities extend beyond regulatory matters. Typically, coastal programs develop and distribute data and information; formulate policies regarding the coastal area; conduct research on coastal resources, processes, uses, and problems; conceive general plans and strategies for addressing coast-wide issues; make available technical and financial assistance, promote access to the coast; and recognize the importance of both resource protection and economic use of the coastal area. Any of these nonregulatory roles can be the basis for bringing people together to improve and enhance overall management of the coastal area.

#### *Techniques and Examples*

Grant money made available to local or area governments, nonprofits, and other organizations is an effective way to both invest others in coastal management and improve management or physical conditions in the coastal areas. Many states operate small grant programs designed to support innovative local-level coastal management projects, education programs, and research.

Task forces or working groups with interagency representation and stakeholder participation are an excellent way to tackle well-defined, complex issues while at the same time promote cooperative relationships that will have long-term benefits.

Educational, outreach or conference/workshop type programs are most commonly done by collaborating organizations either as one-time offerings or long-term relationships. Typically, each organization brings a particular strength to the collaboration, e.g., funding support, content, educational expertise, mailing lists, meeting facilities. Working collaborations tend to be self-perpetuating. Potential topic areas would include coastal hazards, public access, growth and development, coastal awareness, etc.

Assigning program staff the specific responsibility to initiate and maintain regular contact with local officials and community-based organizations is a very effective way of ensuring mutually beneficial relationships at the local level. Trust builds over time with offers of technical assistance, support with issues, small grant awards, educational forums, as state and local governments learn that there are more shared concerns than there are areas of disagreement. These staff members can work either out of the central office (as in Connecticut) or out of regional offices (as in Massachusetts, and some of the larger states). These staff members serve to represent the coastal program to municipalities and as gateways into agency programs as well as provide a local perspective to DEP. The key aspect is that this responsibility for building and maintaining local relationships is their primary purpose.

Establishing principal points of contact on specific topics (e.g., public access, coastal hazards, etc.) within the coastal planning office or the broader coastal program offers another pathway for public and municipal involvement. These points of contact can

provide technical support in the case of local decisions, can facilitate—from a point of advanced understanding—between groups, and get local folks in touch with the appropriate state/federal people.

### 3. Public Education

It is in the interest of coastal management programs to undertake educational and outreach activities for the purpose of enhancing general public knowledge of the coastal area and the social and physical processes that affect its health. The primary focus of education efforts is to provide the public with information about the natural environment, living resources, human uses, and issues of the coastal area. Beyond a worthy goal of contributing to a better-informed citizenry, public education efforts yield lasting benefits for coastal management. A better-informed public will be more effective participants in the processes of program and policy development and refinement as well as in regulatory processes. Further, the more people know about the coastal area, the more likely they will be to become active participants in program initiatives.

Educational efforts help to encourage individuals to be more cognizant of the value and status of coastal area resources. This mindfulness encourages a more engaged response to coastal zone policy, as well as the possibility that public interest may translate into strong public support for certain policies or programs. This support could not only strengthen these programs, but could aid in expansion of the program's efforts or additional funding.

There are a multitude of techniques used to educate the public about coastal management and the coastal environment. The techniques vary depending on the target population and the type of information to be provided.

As is obvious in the descriptions below, a number of these types of activities are designed to achieve more than just education by providing guidance for or the opportunity to become involved in a management or decision-making role.

Generally, these public involvement efforts are the focus of a small staff in the CZM programs, but public involvement is a program-wide philosophy that influences program-wide thinking and approaches. Often, public involvement and education is a principal role of the CZM program augmented with specialized topics by associated agencies, such as DEP. The measure of success will be increases in the satisfaction level and involvement of the public.

#### *Techniques and Examples*

In general, written materials still represent a very effective and lasting means of providing information on the coastal environment and issues. The key is to ensure that these materials are widely available – especially among populations that may not have adequate computer access – and updated regularly.

Some state coastal programs have an integrated public education and awareness strategy through which a number of outreach and education activities are coordinated. As an example, the Virgin Islands' CZM Public Outreach/Education program includes both education-oriented and participation-oriented strategies, including:

- a quarterly newsletter.
- a Coral Reef Educational video in English and Spanish for the general public, schools, contractors, architects, and homeowner associations.
- television commercials for beach cleanup campaigns.
- exhibits at all environmental and science fairs, such as Earth Day, Wetlands Months, Agricultural week, and Education Science Fair Day.

- slide show presentations and display boards for use in schools, private organizations and homeowners associations, etc.
- print, radio and newspaper media outreach commercials and talk shows to promote the message of the coastal zone management program's mission and inform the public about how they can get involved through participating and using best management practices.
- summer camp environmental education projects, upon request, to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Church Summer Camps and others.

“Coastweeks” is an increasingly popular educational opportunity started more than 15 years ago to emphasize the importance and beauty of our coasts and to educate the public on coastal issues. Coastweeks events and activities provide educational messages in a fun, participatory atmosphere. New Jersey engages the public through these types of festivals every year as does Puerto Rico, New York, Massachusetts, Georgia, Delaware, Hawaii and other states. Another widespread coastal initiative is the Adopt-a-Beach program sponsored by a number of states. This program encourages and organizes groups and individuals to maintain segments of the coast and engage more fully in coastal issues on a continuing basis.

Coastal programs have developed curriculum for use in primary and secondary schools and send qualified staff to schools to present special topics or lead field trips to coastal sites.

Another aspect of public education is the sponsoring or conducting of research, training, and technical assistance for specific coastal constituencies. Volunteer coastal water quality monitoring efforts depend on a certain degree of training and organizing by the host organization, but the yield is one of the most devoted constituencies that provides information of great value in resource management and regulatory programs.

In most states the types of activities described above are carried out individually or jointly by a variety of governmental and nongovernmental entities. This is the case in New Jersey where, for example, the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve develops curriculum, the Marine Science Consortium and Sea Grant organize Coastweeks, and the Watershed Programs lead on citizen monitoring. As emphasized in an earlier section of this paper, collaboration and coordination among organizations can extend the reach and impact of any activity. It is a rare educational program that wouldn't welcome or benefit from some fresh ideas, a bit of funding, new audiences, or technical, staff, and logistical assistance. The New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Program might explore how it could partner with these and other organizations to enhance the efforts and gain some recognition and exposure in this area. A staff person with expertise in education and outreach would be a worthwhile investment for the NJCZMP.

Several state coastal programs, including New Jersey, have produced outstanding publications, such as a coastal atlas or a coastal resource guide, that have become reference works in schools and offices or collectors items.

#### **4. Program Visibility**

All of the activities described above, in addition to their specific purposes, will serve to increase awareness of the coastal program among citizens, elected officials, government agencies nongovernmental organizations, and other coastal constituencies. The interviews conducted during the initial evaluation stage of this program assessment indicated that there is very little awareness of a coastal program in New Jersey other than the regulatory function. Respondents said they generally supported coastal management, but the existing coastal program in New Jersey lacks the cohesive identity necessary to attract and coalesce that



support. Visibility of a proactive/planning capability that includes technical and financial assistance to 1) those who really make the decisions at either the state or local level, and 2) the general public who might be induced to support coastal management legislatively, financially, and in their own personal actions are reasons for there to be a visible coastal program.

While the best and most appropriate way to attract favorable attention to the program is by making positive contributions to the health of the coastal ecosystem, the sound management of development and uses, the availability of publicly accessible shorelines, specific activities aimed at promoting the program's accomplishments, its current activities or future initiatives also serve to encourage others to become involved in the program or lend support when needed.

### *Techniques and Examples*

The following are all activities engaged in by coastal programs throughout the nation to spread the word, build constituencies, and raise the profile of the program. Any of these might be appropriate tools to increase visibility for the NJCZMP depending on what the coastal constituencies suggest is needed or desired.

- Community workshops
- Open house meetings, forums on specific issues
- Presentations to organizations and local governments
- Information packets
- Press releases
- Local or regional work groups
- Videos (topical, training)
- Display booth for events
- Public access maps, websites or guides
- Improved website
- Speakers, films, and slide shows available on request
- In-state regional conferences
- Internet network, listserv, e-newsletter
- Poster or essay competitions
- Model plans, regulations
- Community service projects such as monitoring programs, catchbasin stenciling, stream teams, beach cleanups
- Coastweeks coordination and advertisement
- Aquarium exhibits

### Questions for Discussion

- What initiatives would help change the perception of stakeholders and the public that the New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Program is simply a regulatory program?
- What techniques would increase the visibility of the New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Program?
- What would make the New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Program more meaningful to local governments?
- What sorts of assistance (*e.g.*, technical, financial) could be provided to municipal and county governments and other groups to increase consistency and compatibility of state and local decision making in the coastal area?
- What are the various constituencies that should be engaged by the NJCZMP and what are some of the ways each could be best reached and served?
- There are numerous organizations in the state engaged in public education, participation, and outreach related to coastal management. Is it appropriate and useful for CZM to work with these groups? What role would be most useful for the NJCZMP?