

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF  
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Tom Kitsos, Associate Deputy Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Thank you for this opportunity to testify on S. 360, a bill to reauthorize and amend the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA).

In general, the Administration supports CZMA reauthorization and this legislation. We appreciate the efforts of Senator Snowe in sponsoring this bill and for supporting this program, which has served as a cornerstone for national coastal policy for more than 30 years.

The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 created an innovative intergovernmental program that has been of great benefit to the Nation, the States, and the public. The CZMA recognizes and balances national objectives in development and conservation of coastal and ocean areas with the historical interest and role of the States in governing near shore development and land use. Under federally approved coastal management programs States are provided incentives and assistance to coordinate their environmental, resource management and development programs and objectives to promote sustainable coastal development and long-term conservation. Under the CZMA's estuarine research reserve program, States - often in partnership with academia and Federal agencies - implement research and education programs to better understand complex coastal processes.

My testimony will focus on the success of the CZMA and the importance of reauthorization of CZMA through S. 360.

**THE SUCCESS OF THE CZMA**

For the past 33 years, the Federal Government, States, and local governments have worked under the unique partnership created by the CZMA to "preserve, protect, develop, and where possible, to restore or enhance the resources of the Nation's coastal zone for the present and future generations."

In response to the report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan highlighted the importance of ongoing and renewed efforts to "assist State, Tribal, and local stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategies to protect the nation's coastal resources." The U.S. Ocean Action Plan specifically supports reauthorization of the CZMA and outlines many other critical actions to be implemented in partnership with the coastal States, some in conjunction with State coastal management and estuarine reserve programs. To this end, we are currently working with EPA and the states to conduct a series of community workshops to improve coastal watershed protection, as well as working with the State of Illinois to complete the voluntary state participation in the CZM system.

Coastal estuaries are among the most biologically productive regions in the Nation. The States' Coastal Management Programs and National Estuarine Research Reserves advance research, best management practices, and the development of infrastructure necessary to better understand and address the complex relationships between people and the coast. This understanding comes not only from CZMA-supported research into the natural functions of our coastal areas, but also into man's impact upon them, all in an effort to sustain the long-term economic and ecological viability of irreplaceable coastal resources to support an ecosystem approach to management. State programs address a wide range of national objectives, including:

- Maintaining and restoring the natural beach and dune systems for protection from erosion and storms,
- Providing for appropriate coastal development,
- Protecting and restoring ecologically important coastal habitats,
- Controlling nonpoint source pollution,
- Improving public access and recreational opportunities in coastal areas,
- Enhancing public awareness through education and outreach, and
- Revitalizing local waterfronts.

### *Coastal Zone Management Program*

Thirty-four of the thirty-five eligible coastal States, Commonwealths, and Territories are implementing Federally approved coastal management plans. As recommended in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, NOAA is working with the final eligible coastal State, Illinois, to approve its coastal management program. Through the CZMA, NOAA provides funding for developing and implementing the plans, and provides technical assistance on best practices for addressing important coastal management issues. Funding for the CZM program is allocated to eligible coastal states based on shoreline mileage and coastal population. We appreciate efforts to ensure funding increases can be distributed equitably among all state programs. This funding is required to be matched on a dollar for dollar basis, yet many states far exceed this match requirement and are able to leverage additional state resources and using CZMA dollars. For example, the Maine Coastal Program has been successful in matching state dollars to federal dollars at a ratio of more than 5:1; in past years this ratio has been as high as 11:1.

The CZMA's Federal consistency provisions provide a unique tool to meet State coastal objectives, while ensuring a coordinated national approach to coastal management. The

consistency provisions apply to Federal agencies, as well as individuals and groups applying for federal permits and funding. The consistency provisions require any proposed activities that have reasonably foreseeable effects on any land, water use or natural resource of the coastal zone to be consistent with the enforceable components of Federally-approved State Coastal Management Programs. States have concurred with about 95 percent of the projects they have reviewed under these provisions. NOAA recently completed a series of regional federal consistency workshops that have helped State and Federal agencies to better coordinate and collaborate on CZMA consistency requirements and improve the efficiency of the process.

### *National Estuary Research Reserve Program*

Critical, long-term research takes place at the twenty-six Federally designated National Estuarine Research Reserves (Reserves) in twenty-one coastal States and Commonwealths. Texas currently is pursuing designation of an additional site. Connecticut and Wisconsin have expressed interest in designation of new Reserves. The Reserves play an important role in meeting the U.S. Ocean Action Plan's goal to "expand our scientific knowledge of oceans, coasts and Great Lakes."

Reserves currently protect over one million acres of estuarine lands and waters, and Reserve programs conduct important research, monitoring, education and stewardship activities within coastal watersheds. The Reserve system has developed system-wide efforts and standards to ensure data compatibility and consistent methodologies are used at all sites. The Reserve's System-Wide Monitoring Program includes 104 water-quality monitoring stations and 26 weather stations. The system provides important environmental data in support of the national backbone of the Integrated Ocean Observing System supported in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan. The Reserve system also supports a fellowship program, training up to 52 graduate students each year in estuarine science. This fellowship program not only facilitates important research, but also encourages the development of young scientists to sustain the science workforce to meet the Nation's needs.

Coastal Management and Reserve outreach programs educate thousands of local citizens, teachers, students, and policy-makers on the important connections between people, the land, and the sea, supporting sustainable and ecosystem-based approaches to coastal resource management. The Reserve coastal training program reaches hundreds of coastal decision makers each year, providing them with information to improve management of our fragile coastal resources.

### *The CZMA Benefits the Nation*

State coastal management programs and the network of Reserves enhance the vitality of our coastal economies and the protection and sustainability of important coastal resources and habitats.

**Habitat Conservation** – The Reserves provide long-term protection and advance our

understanding of sensitive estuarine habitats. In FY 2002-2003, the Reserve system, working through State partners, acquired more than 13,500 acres of valuable habitat for research, education and stewardship purposes.

**Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control** – Coastal States and Territories continue to protect and restore coastal waters from the harmful effects of polluted runoff. Recently, Wisconsin passed the nation’s most comprehensive nonpoint source regulations. These rules outline performance standards for various sources of polluted runoff ranging from agriculture to urban stormwater; identify appropriate best management practices for runoff control; and enhance existing cost-sharing programs.

**Public Access** – Section 306A of the CZMA, the Coastal Resource Improvement Program, is an important mechanism for many States to support local projects, including providing access to beaches and waterfronts. In 2002-2003, States matched about \$7.5 million in federal funds to develop 163 access projects in 17 States. For example, the Port of Houston Authority, working with the Texas coastal management program, developed the Atkinson Island Interpretive Canoe Trail. The Reserves are also involved in projects to enhance public access. The Grand Bay Reserve in Mississippi is improving and expanding facilities at its two public boat ramps. The Rookery Bay Reserve in Florida has developed public parking, a boat launch and a 2.5-mile boardwalk at Tarpon Bay.

**Coastal Hazards** – The risk of dramatic loss of life and property from storms and other coastal hazards is increasing daily as coastal development and population continues to surge. Oregon coastal managers developed the Oregon Coastal Atlas to improve and streamline hazard-related decision making related to tsunami inundation and landslides. The Oregon Coastal Management Program is also working with the NOAA Coastal Services Center to develop a coastal erosion forecast tool for the Atlas. North Carolina, also in cooperation with the NOAA Coastal Services Center, has developed a tool to help visualize flood forecasts. Implemented during Hurricane Isabel, this geographic information system (GIS) helps citizens better understand the likely impacts of impending storm events.

**Coastal Community Development** – State coastal management programs promote more livable communities by providing technical and management assistance to local governments. The Washington Coastal Management Program and Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve utilized the Reserve’s Coastal Training Program to educate local planners on how development impacts natural shoreline processes. The CZMA also serves as a conduit for delivery of many NOAA products and services that help state and local governments as they prepare and implement plans to revitalize waterfronts, cleanup coastal brownfields, and restore degraded coastal resources.

**CZM Performance Measures** – NOAA is conducting an on-going effort to develop and evaluate performance measures to better gauge the successes of State coastal management programs and the Reserves. NOAA has developed this performance measurement system over the past four years, in partnership with the States. This information, in combination with the

results of periodic programmatic evaluations required by the CZMA, can be used to determine the true state of our coasts and the programs that manage them.

## **IMPORTANCE OF S.360**

The CZMA has provided numerous benefits to States and to the citizens living, working, and recreating in our coastal communities. Because of its emphasis on cooperation and coordination, the CZMA has enjoyed widespread support from Congress, States, local governments, interest groups, and the public. The Administration supports CZMA reauthorization and appreciates the efforts of Senator Snowe and Senator Kerry, in introducing S. 360.

S. 360 proposes new methods for addressing the ever-increasing pressures on the coastal zone. This legislation would add two new categories to Section 309, Coastal Zone Enhancement Grants. These new categories would allow funding to be used for coastal nonpoint pollution control programs and state-specific emerging issues. Secondly, it proposes a new Coastal Community Grants program to help assess and manage growth, public infrastructure, and open space needs. This program would provide for management-oriented research and technical assistance through the existing state coastal management programs and estuarine reserves. Through amendments such as these, the CZMA could provide communities with greater flexibility to mitigate population growth, revitalize urban waterfronts and water-dependent economies, provide for increased public access, conserve and restore important coastal habitats, and further reduce the threat to lives and property associated with coastal storms.

S. 360 could be strengthened by ensuring Section 17, *Authorization for Appropriations*, is consistent with the President's Budget Request.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, the CZMA is a vital tool for coordinating and integrating local, State and Federal policies and programs affecting the coast and for building a national cooperative effort to protect resources, provide access and mitigate risk, while supporting coastal-dependent development. The reauthorization of the CZMA offers an excellent opportunity to renew the Federal commitment to enhancing and restoring America's coastal resources. The amendments offered in S. 360 would improve an already effective partnership between the Federal government, the State coastal management programs, and National Estuarine Research Reserves. The proposed Coastal Communities Program would help encourage new and innovative methods for addressing many of the problems faced by the coastal States and communities. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to working with you on reauthorizing this important program.

I will be glad to answer any questions.