

Coastal Zone Management Program—Enhancement Grant Assessments and Strategies

WETLANDS

State Assessment and Strategy Overview

The Coastal Zone Enhancement Program, authorized under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), encourages states and territories to conduct self-assessments of their Coastal Management Programs and develop strategies to improve management of the following areas: wetlands, coastal hazards, public access, marine debris, cumulative and secondary impacts, special area management planning, ocean/Great Lakes resources, energy and government facility siting, and aquaculture. Every five years, states assess their management of all nine areas and develop enhancement strategies for their highest priority issues. The assessments highlight past successes and identify needs that will help improve coastal resource management.

We hope these summaries will be used to generate discussion and new ideas, target existing products and services, guide new project development in NOAA and the states, and promote partnerships and information sharing. Please use the contact information at the end to follow up with any ideas or questions.

Assessment Findings and Recent Trends

The primary threat to coastal wetlands identified in the assessments is increased development and filling. Several state programs noted potential implications of the 2001 SWANCC Supreme Court decision, which limited the power of the Clean Water Act to regulate

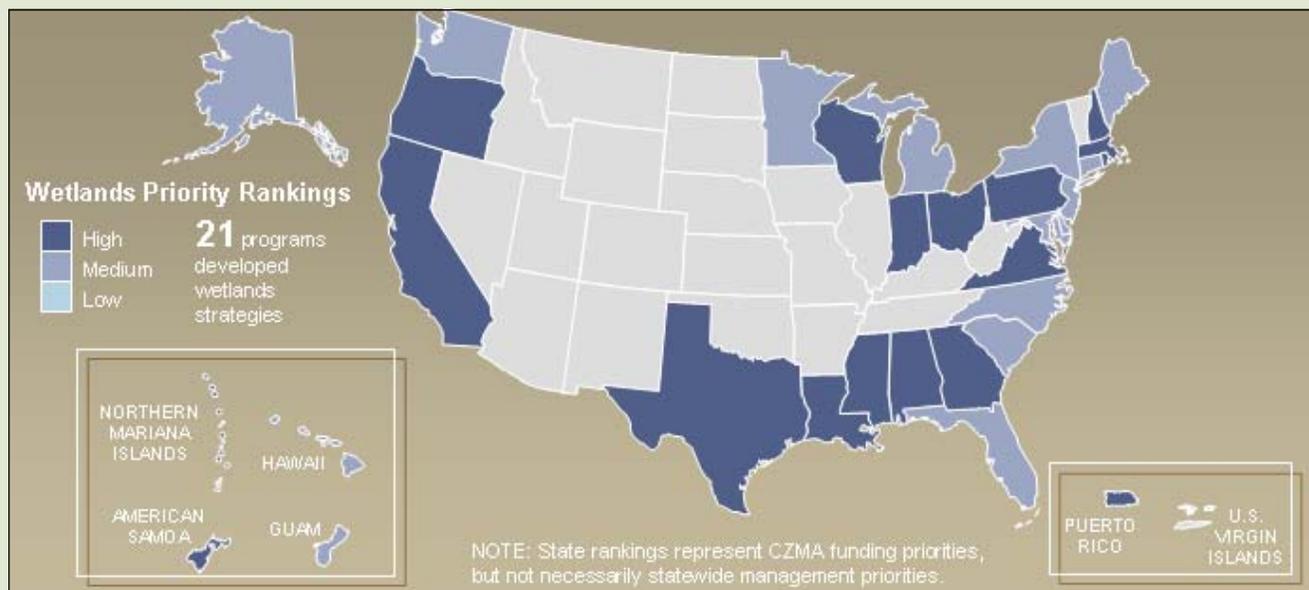
waters of the U.S. that are “non-navigable, isolated and intrastate.” This decision most impacted those states that do not have state laws relating specifically to isolated, non-tidal wetlands.

Fifteen programs noted significant changes to wetlands restoration programs during the last 309 assessment period. However, in many cases, these advances were due to funding specifically allocated to large-scale, site-specific habitat restoration projects rather than the creation of an overall state-wide coordinated wetlands restoration strategy. Exotic and invasive species were also listed as a high wetlands threat in the majority of coastal states.

Primary Needs and Information Gaps

State Coastal Zone Management Programs were asked to identify their primary needs and information gaps for wetlands. The following is a list of the most commonly identified needs:

- Need for additional **wetland monitoring data**, to assist in tracking wetland acreage gains and losses as well as trends in wetland habitat quality
- Need to improve **monitoring** of restored wetlands sites, to account for voluntary restoration, as well as measure the success of required mitigation projects
- Need for **new state authorities** to protect isolated or non-tidal wetlands



- Need to increase **wetlands projection at the local level** through the development of new wetland protection ordinances, improved land use planning, and increased education for local officials
- Need for new **coastal habitat restoration** programs, organized at either the state or local community level

Recent Successes

For most state coastal management programs, 2005-2006 was the fourth cycle of self assessments and strategy development. Below are a few examples of strategies implemented by the states that demonstrate successes in improving wetlands management.

- In 2005, **New Hampshire** implemented new compensatory wetland mitigation rules that established mitigation ratios and also allow the option to preserve upland buffer areas in addition to restoring or creating wetlands. Between 2001-2005, more than 9,210 acres were protected through New Hampshire's mitigation program.
- The **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC)** updated and amended the Bay Plan's salt pond findings, policies and map designations. The update allowed BCDC to analyze public policy implications relating to the current salt production process, the public acquisition of some salt ponds for wetland restoration purposes, the restoration and wildlife management potential of salt ponds, and potential for reusing some of the ponds for uses other than salt production. This Plan update enabled BCDC to better address and plan for the largest tidal marsh restoration underway on the West Coast, the South Bay Restoration Plan.
- The **Michigan Coastal Management Program** developed new public guidance to support implementation of wetland mitigation rules developed in 2000. The program also created new agency procedures to develop, process, and track the conservation easements required for mitigation of permitted wetlands loss; this will enhance the program's ability to ensure the long-term viability of mitigation sites as well as pursue necessary compliance actions.

Promising Strategies for 2006—2010

As part of the State Enhancement Grant Program, state coastal management programs are asked to develop strategies to address their high priority resource management issues identified in the assessment. Below are a few examples of strategies proposed for wetlands:

- For the 2006 - 2010 309 Assessment and Strategy, the **Louisiana Coastal Resources Program** plans to support the development of legislation to create a

Beneficial Use of Dredge Material Mitigation Account. The Mitigation Account will be supported by fees from projects where the beneficial use of dredged material would not be cost effective. This account will enable Louisiana to fund coastal wetlands restoration and other large-scale restoration projects dependent upon coastal sediment sources.

- The **American Samoa Coastal Program** will continue to use 309 funding to support the development and expansion of village wetlands ordinances based on the Community Based Wetlands Management Program (CBWMP). The involvement of local officials dramatically increases the enforcement of American Samoa's wetland ordinances. To date, seven villages have adopted ordinances and the program plans to work with an additional four villages to develop local wetlands programs.
- To reduce the loss of marsh acreage and function, the **Georgia Coastal Management Program** will develop new guidelines for improved enforcement and compliance. This project will strengthen monitoring, enforcement, and compliance with the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act and increase the Program's efficiency in protecting Georgia's salt marshes.
- The **Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program** will support seven local Planning District Commissions in developing local conservation corridors that identify and prioritize habitat areas for conservation and restoration. This project will increase coordination between local agencies as well as support Virginia's wetland management goal of achieving a net gain in wetlands.



Eagle Point Marsh - Lake Erie coastal wetlands along Sandusky Bay in Ohio

Questions, ideas or for more information:
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