

# ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF COASTAL MANAGEMENT

## STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION SUMMARY BY TOPIC:

### HABITAT

#### TOPIC SUMMARY

The topic of habitat was discussed at all five regional meetings, in a total of eight breakout sessions. From the eight breakout groups the following themes surfaced:

*Need more coordination* - Policy decisions made at different level of governments and across multiple agencies may all impact habitats in different ways. Also, multiple-sources of data are gathered and stored by private, academic, and government stakeholders. There are currently insufficient incentives to encourage private landowners to participate in large habitat management efforts. More coordination would provide opportunities to maximize benefits, minimize impacts, increase efficiencies, and pool funding for habitat-related issues.

*Need a more regional approach* - Given the cross-jurisdictional nature of habitat, many participants saw benefits to encouraging more regional coordination of shared habitats.

*Need standardized tools, best practices, and protocols* - There are few standard practices around habitat management including how data is gathered, what data is gathered, what should be monitored, how it should be monitored and evaluated, what habitat-related considerations should be made in comprehensive plans and state coastal zone management plans, and who should be involved in policy-making. Additionally, there are diverse views about a best practice approach to habitat management- approaches can be based on science, eco-systems, regions, protection, and conservation.

*Need more educational tools* - Habitat issues are complex, and policy-makers, landowners, and the public need to understand the nuances and options for making better decisions about habitat management.

#### OBSTACLES

##### *Uses and Impacts*

- Multiple human users of shoreline and coastal habitat, many with multiple priorities and visions of how the resource should be used (for development, for conservation, etc)
- Multiple species, with different habitat needs and what is okay for one species might adversely impact another
- Habitat fragmentation resulting from multiple uses and jurisdictional authorities

##### *Management and Decision-Making*

- Current CZMA and other federal, state, and local policies offer conflicting mandates about coastal/shoreline use and management; conflicting economic goals and conservation goals
- Insufficient communication and information sharing between diverse habitat stakeholders, including scientists, data gatherers, policy-makers, resource users, program administrators, and citizens about habitat-related issues

### *Education and Values*

- Different approaches and visions for habitat management; area-based, eco-system-based, protection, restoration of habitat: these approaches may not be compatible with one another.
- Gaps in scientific understanding about how ocean habitats work make it difficult to evaluate proposals and predict impacts.

### *Data and Mapping*

- Lack of tools to value habitat, both economic value and environmental value
- Insufficient maps and data of regional ecological systems

## **PARTICIPANT GENERATED SOLUTIONS**

### *Mapping and Data Collection*

- Coordinate regional mapping and data collection regarding habitat, including for game and non-game species.
- Fund programs that involve citizen stakeholders and citizen scientists in data collection and monitoring programs.
- Develop habitat-related baseline standards and/or best practices which may be used to evaluate habitat programs and initiatives. Standards should address subaquatic soil mapping and monitoring and include tools such as four dimensional maps and substrate maps.
- Identify high priority habitat. Use that information to inform local and regional comprehensive planning efforts and private land owners' land use planning.
- Develop a central system, web-based or otherwise, to store maps, data, and stakeholder information related to habitat.
- Develop modeling tools to visualize and analyze impacts development, natural disasters, and other land use changes to habitat.
- Require watershed assessments as part of coastal zone management plans.

### *Funding and Financial Incentives*

- Employ user pay models and fees to fund acquisition, management, and education initiatives including: water use fees – penny a gallon of use or one time fee for amount of water runoff a property will generate; allocate more gas tax money to conservation; tax for use of waterfront; real estate transfer fees, habitat loss tax.
- Develop a tool/system/standard that can be used to determine the economic and ecological values of habitat.
- Provide a permanent source of funding for land acquisition. May include: Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Act funding for all coastal zone management programs, reform of Pittman-Roberts, Dingell-Johnson, and Wallop-Breaux to allow for land acquisition.
- Modify CZMA so that states can provide funding to NGOs to work on habitat issues.
- Create incentives for private landowners to preserve/restore habitat. Farm-Bill type program to provide private landowners incentives to conserve their land. Establish a fund for private property habitat assessments.
- Develop disincentives for developing sensitive lands, such as restrictions on federal restoration funds for developments located on sensitive lands.

### *Management*

- NOAA and CZMA should take the lead in disseminating best practices for habitat management, which would be disseminated to states and local governments.
- Encourage a regional approach to habitat management, including funding for regional initiatives; technical resources, best practices, and advice for managing land on a regional basis; and working together as a region to target certain critical habitats for acquisition, restoration, protection/management
- Coordinate all federal agency efforts around habitat related issues, including Department of Fish and Wildlife, Environmental Protection Agency, Transportation Administration, and NOAA.
- Adopt the goal of no loss of critical habitat under the CZMA.
- Increase the role for science and scientists in policy-making at the federal, state, and local levels including endorsing science-based policy-making and promoting greater collaborations between scientists and policy-makers.
- Identify critical areas and require states to develop plans for protecting those areas in their coastal zone management plans.
- Include in state land acquisition plans provisions for protecting tidal and submerged aquatic habitats.
- Move the **Estuary Restoration Act** from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to NOAA.

**Comment [11]:** Or is it the “coastal Wetlands, planning, protection and restoration act?”

### *Education*

- Establish programs to educate citizens and decision-makers at federal, state, and local levels about land use, planning, and the impacts of development on habitat. Develop educational materials. Launch an educational road show.
- Fund a regional habitat ombudsman who would provide technical advice to local governments and private property owners about habitat-related issues.
- Educate tourists who use habitat resources by developing a habitat education certificate for tour operators.