

ACHIEVING A BALANCE between economic growth and protection of valuable coastal resources is an exceptionally difficult challenge. Almost half of the U.S. population lives and works within the U.S. coastal zone—an area that covers only 11 percent of the country's land. Yet this 11 percent supports approximately 190 seaports, contains most of our largest cities, and serves as nursery and spawning grounds for marine life.

the coastal zone management act TREASURE OUR COASTS and ESTUARIES

In 1972, Congress recognized the importance of meeting the challenge of continued growth in the coastal zone, and responded to the threats to our coasts and oceans by passing the Coastal Zone Management Act. This Act, administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), provides for management of the nation's coastal resources, including the Great Lakes, by balancing economic development with environmental conservation. Careful management is necessary to ensure that people are able to enjoy clean water and a healthy ecosystem that supports a vibrant coastal economy.

The Coastal Zone Management Act created two national programs to better understand and manage our nation's 95,439 miles of shoreline—the National Coastal Zone Management Program and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.



The National Coastal Management Program encourages coastal states and territories to work in partnership with the federal government to effectively manage our coasts. It is the only program of its kind to address coastal issues in a comprehensive, integrated way. By leveraging federal and state matching funds, this program gives states the flexibility to design a program that accommodates their unique coastal challenges and legal framework. Thirty-four of the thirty-five eligible coastal and Great Lakes states and territories have now entered into this voluntary partnership.

The National Estuarine Research Reserves System helps to fulfill NOAA's stewardship mission to sustain healthy coasts by improving the nation's understanding and stewardship of estuaries. Each reserve is a "living laboratory" in which scientists conduct research and educators communicate research results. Reserve staff members work with local communities and regional groups to address natural resource management issues. Through integrated research and education, the reserves help communities develop strategies to deal successfully with these coastal resource issues.

Through both the state Coastal Management Programs and the National Estuarine Research Reserves System, we are learning how to manage these coastal areas better, for today and for the future.

