



# **Puerto Rico Coastal Management Program**

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## **Program Description**

The Puerto Rico Coastal Management Program protects coastal lands, dunes, waters, wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs, and other natural resources through a variety of initiatives. The Program manages a network of Natural Protected Areas, directs a multi-agency effort to manage Special Planning Areas, implements the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program, manages public trust resources throughout the Commonwealth's maritime zone, and has enhanced public access to Puerto Rico's coasts. Ongoing activities of the Puerto Rico Coastal Management program include permitting, development review and enforcement, natural reserves designation and management, public education and outreach, coastal access, coral reef management, and coastal nonpoint pollution management.

The coastal program confronts the challenges of increasing development pressures, sedimentation and erosion, coastal hazards, and illegal use of the island's maritime zone (its shoreline, territorial waters, and submerged lands). Shipping, tourism, and agriculture are the territory's major industries.

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## **Special Features and Species**

- Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
  - Bioluminescent bays
  - Tropical rain forest
  - Coral reefs
  - Major turtle nesting sites
  - Mangrove lagoons
  - Caves
  - Vieques, Culebra, Mona and other offshore islands
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## Program Facts

- The Puerto Rico Coastal Management Program received Federal approval in 1978
  - Puerto Rico has 46 coastal municipalities and 700 miles of shoreline
  - The commonwealth's coastal population reached 3,808,610 in 2000, an increase of 8% since 1990 and 40% since 1970
  - Nearly five million tourists annually spend close to \$1.8 billion in Puerto Rico
  - Puerto Rico was the first island territory or commonwealth, and fourth program overall, to receive full federal approval of its Coastal Nonpoint Program.
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## Program Administration

The Puerto Rico Coastal Zone Management Program (PRCZMP) is administered by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, Javier Vélez Arocho, Secretary. Secretary Vélez Arocho took office on January 9, 2005, following the election of the new Governor, Anibal Acevedo Vila. The former Program Manager, Ernesto Diaz, was subsequently promoted to Natural Resources Administrator, and has been replaced by Francisco Quintana as Acting Director of the PRCZMP. The PRCZMP is administered in partnership with the NOS Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management and other federal and commonwealth agencies. Approved by NOAA in 1978, the Program is based in San Juan.

The Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) is the lead coastal zone agency. The DNER manages the maritime zone, coastal waters, and submerged lands. However, the primary agency that influences coastal development is the Puerto Rico Planning Board (PRPB), the sole land use regulatory authority in Puerto Rico. Other coastal management agencies include the Environmental Quality Board (EQB), which adopts basic environmental policy, regulates the preparation of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements, and adopts and enforces pollution control standards and regulations; and the Regulations and Permits Administration, which implements the Planning Board's regulations by reviewing development plans and issuing construction and use permits.

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## Contact

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