



DEC 12 2003

The Honorable Richard Pombo
Chairman, Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6201

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter provides you with the Department's views on H.R. 1028, entitled the *Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization of 2003*, introduced by Representative Saxton on February 27, 2003. The Department appreciates the Committee's support for this important legislation and offers the following comments on H.R. 1028 for consideration.

The Department supports the bill's four-year reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The Department is concerned however, with the fragmented approach that Congress is presently pursuing as it seeks to reauthorize the CZMA. As currently structured, the CZMA provides a cohesive approach to coastal and estuarine management from the research and education that occurs at National Estuarine Research Reserves to the day-to-day implementation of Coastal Management Programs. H.R. 1028 addresses only one component of the authorized activities in the CZMA. Two other separate pieces of legislation, H.R. 1025 and H.R. 1026, also introduced in the 108th Congress, address different sections of the CZMA.

The Department appreciates the intent of the bill to ensure the equitable distribution of grant funds to coastal states. This is consistent with our existing approach, statute and regulations. We would like to work with you to ensure that section 306 (c) is flexible enough to address outside factors such as changing populations and number of participating states.

The Department in general supports the intent of H.R. 1028, but strongly believes that any efforts to reauthorize components of the CZMA should be done in one complete package that encompasses all facets of the legislation as it is currently structured. The Department intends to submit a comprehensive legislative package to reauthorize the CZMA in the Second Session of the 108th Congress.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this letter to the Congress from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Theodore W. Kassinger". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Theodore W. Kassinger

cc: The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II, Ranking Member