

## Coastal Zone Management Program—Enhancement Grant Assessments and Strategies

**PUBLIC ACCESS****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.

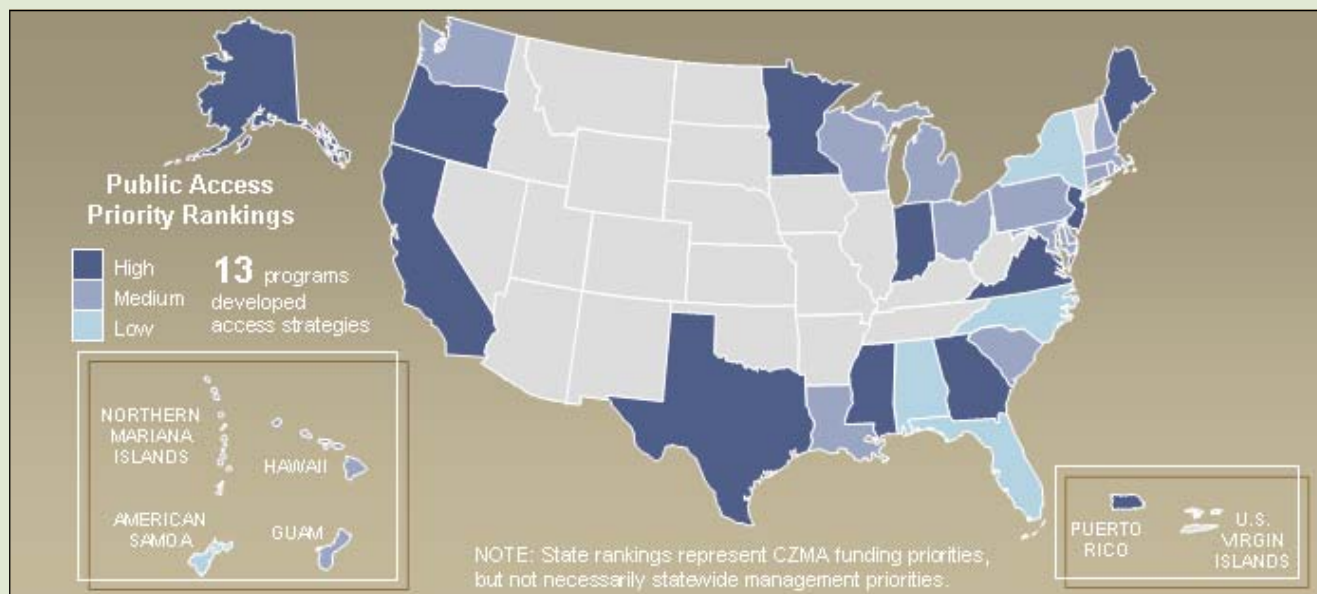
We hope these summaries will be used to generate discussion and new ideas, target existing products and services, guide new project development in NOAA and the states, and promote partnerships and information sharing. Please use the contact information at the end to follow up with any ideas or questions.

**Assessment Findings and Recent Trends**

Ensuring that the public can access coastal and estuarine environments and waters is an important management issue for coastal states and territories. An emerging issue nationally since 2001 is, that as the supply of undeveloped lands decreases, developers increasingly

focus on redevelopment projects. Some waterfront property owners sell to capture high land values; others are forced out due to rising property taxes or rents. The result is that formerly “public” facilities such as hotels and commercially-operated marinas become condos and private marinas. States are finding their permit review processes do not account for the loss of access that can occur when a site is developed or re-developed. This loss affects recreational users as well as commercial users, such as fishermen.

Use and land suitability conflicts also continue to be a problem. Different types of recreational users compete for the same limited access resources, sometimes leading to conflict. Some states have responded by creating use-specific access points, such as small ramps and docks for hand-carried vessels (canoes, kayaks) that can be car-topped to the access point. Coastal managers must also balance access with the protection of the sensitive habitats found in the same places access points are desired. For example, marinas, docks, and piers impact submerged aquatic vegetation and shellfish beds. Accounting for the cumulative effect of such construction is a huge challenge. The desire to protect undeveloped areas, together with limited funding, has made enhancing existing access sites a priority over creating new ones. Adding parking, comfort facilities, and other amenities to existing areas is a lower-cost alternative, but must be balanced with the impacts from concentrating uses and users.



## Primary Needs and Information Gaps

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

- **Access Inventories and Analysis:** Many states still need a comprehensive inventory of existing access, preferably in a database with an associated GIS data layer locating access sites. States also need to characterize and analyze user demand for different types of access. Comprehensive inventories facilitate state efforts to relate access demand to its availability, and thus assess its need.
- **Loss of Access:** Many states cited a need for the ability to address the loss of public access due to development or privatization of publicly-available facilities. For example, a regulatory approach might comprise review and assessment of impacts to access from development during permitting coupled with a requirement to mitigate for such loss.
- **Outreach/Education:** Developing or updating public access guides and/or websites is a priority need of many programs. Other access-related topics that programs would like to educate the public about include water quality awareness for swimming and fishing, non-preferred behaviors such as driving on beaches, the importance of protecting and preserving existing access, and the public trust.

## Recent Successes

For most state coastal management programs, 2005-2006 was the fourth cycle of self assessments and strategy development. Below are a couple examples of strategies implemented by the states that demonstrate successes managing public access:

- In **Florida**, the State legislature passed legislation enacting the Waterfronts Florida Program. The program was originally created through a Section 309 Strategy and was designed to encourage the revitalization of working waterfronts through technical and financial assistance to local communities. The legislature recognized its success and importance by creating a statutory basis for the program.
- The State of **New Jersey** now requires permittees to submit easements for land dedicated for public access, when such access is required as a development permit condition. To help support this requirement, a new field was added to a state tracking database that captures permits that contain this public access condition. New Jersey also developed and held a series of workshops on the public trust doctrine and ways to enhance public access. A handbook on the same topics

was developed and distributed in conjunction with the workshops.

## 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 two examples of strategies proposed for public access:

- **Virginia** has helped support the creation of two public access authorities and secured enabling legislation from the General Assembly. These regionally-based bodies are designed to assist localities to identify priority sites for acquisition based on regional needs, leverage funds to support acquisition, and acquire lands. Virginia's Strategy for 2006-2010 will, in part, pursue the creation of public access authorities for the state's remaining six coastal zone regions.
- **Indiana** will develop a comprehensive inventory of existing access sites and incorporate them into the state's outdoor recreation database. This information will be used to develop one or more access guides for the coastal areas. Indiana will also undertake an assessment of public access user needs and perceptions. **Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, and Virginia** plan to undertake similar efforts.



A beach access site in Florida also provides educational signage about rip currents and a safety warning flag system.

Questions, ideas or for more information:  
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