

MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION IN COASTAL MANAGEMENT

Session Chair:

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At the very core of effective coastal management is collaboration. The multitude of competing interests in and uses of coastal resources calls for collaborative and inclusive decision-making that involves government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders. Collaborative, multi-sectoral approaches to problem solving are inherently important in coastal management and are widely cited as principles key to specific management approaches such as ecosystem-based management and integrated coastal management.

Coastal resource managers have recognized this, embracing collaboration and networks as essential components of their work. Collaboration in U.S. coastal resource management is well documented in many areas, such as the highly networked nature of many state coastal zone management programs, the extensive research, education, and stewardship partnerships existing in the nation's National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the growing number of regional governance bodies and other collaborative regional entities, and the collaborative spirit adopted in recent national, government-led initiatives such as the re-visioning of the U.S. Coastal Zone Management Act, just to name a few.

Despite the obvious and critical role that collaboration plays in coastal management, identifying, measuring, and communicating the value of that collaboration is extremely difficult. A wealth of anecdotal evidence from coastal managers will attest to the benefits of collaboration, but identifying, measuring, and communicating these benefits in a more quantitative and precise manner remain a challenge. Recent governmental emphasis on performance measurement and monitoring make this challenge even more imperative. Coastal management programs at the federal, state, and local levels are striving to quantitatively demonstrate the benefits created by their programs, and articulating the value of the collaboration and networking done by coastal programs is a key aspect of this task.

This panel session will address three aspects of collaboration in coastal management: identifying values and benefits of collaboration, measuring those values and benefits, and communicating them to others. The session will convene experts on performance measurement, organizational networks, communication, and other relevant topics, and will include time for audience interaction with panel speakers.

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