

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COASTAL ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT: MOVING BEYOND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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As coastal communities adapt to changing conditions, use new conservation techniques, and plan for evolving human uses, programs must be nimble enough to take advantage of current science yet strategic enough to direct limited resources toward real progress. Doing so requires that programs are able to define success, measure progress, and adapt to improve programming. Do organizations actually do these things well in the real world? How can programs struggling with top down mandates like the *Government Performance Results Act* and *Program Assessment Rating Tool* be responsive and also thoughtful in the way they approach program tracking and evaluation efforts? Can we connect program progress and ecosystem changes in a meaningful way? Are the timescales needed for our programs to work going to fit with evaluation expectations? How can evaluations methods be crafted to support adaptive management and increase efficiency in addressing actual ecosystem-level problems? These are a few of the questions that are looming for the many organizations, academics, and agencies interested in accountable and effective coastal ecosystem science and management programs. Program managers and staff often find themselves with performance measurement and evaluation responsibilities without any training or experience in how they relate to each other and how they relate to natural resource management.

The goal of this session is to improve evaluation processes by sharing information on different approaches to evaluation and stimulating discussions on lessons learned and next steps. Speakers will address challenges and case studies of success from three different perspectives: a) individual program managers; b) organizations tasked with evaluating programs; and c) experts in the field of evaluation. These presentations will be followed by a panel discussion consisting of prepared questions and questions from the audience.

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