

SMART GROWTH AT THE WATER'S EDGE: WATERFRONT & COASTAL COMMUNITY SMART GROWTH

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Waterfront and coastal communities have historically been, and will remain, desirable places to live. A 2004 report released by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration estimated that coastal counties cover less than 17 percent of the land area in the United States, but are home to 53 percent of the population. Within 10 years, that population is expected to grow by 12 million people—or by 3,600 people per day—reaching a total population of 165 million by 2015.¹

The unique amenities that draw people to the coast require special consideration when addressing growth and development. These issues include balancing the dynamic ecology of the land and water interface, revitalizing waterfronts and preserving water dependent uses, providing public access to the waterfront, and planning for hazard resiliency and the impacts of climate change. These considerations help protect important ecosystem functions, maintain a livable community with sense of place, and protect lives, property, and infrastructure.

Smart Growth at the water's edge requires a tailored approach that recognizes the unique opportunities and challenges of waterfront and coastal development. This panel will highlight: 1) the release of the Waterfront and Coastal Smart Growth Elements document developed by NOAA, EPA, and the International City/County Management Association; 2) the Massachusetts coastal smart growth program; and 3) local implementation of coastal smart growth initiatives in Dennis, MA.

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¹ NOAA. 2005. Population Trends Along the Coastal United States: 1980-2008. U.S. Department of Commerce: Washington, D.C.

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