Digital Coast

www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Digital Coast?

The Digital Coast is a web-based, ever-expanding collection of data, tools, trainings, and case studies designed for coastal managers and technicians across the U.S. While the Digital Coast was developed and is currently maintained by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management, hundreds of organizations and federal, state, and local agencies have contributed content. This resource is the proverbial one-stop shop for the nation's coastal management community.

What makes the Digital Coast unique?

The Digital Coast is a curated collection of high-quality, authoritative resources focused on coastal and ocean issues and directed at decision makers and technicians. "More than Just Data" is the slogan because coastal managers need supplemental tools and training to help them process raw data and use it effectively. Digital Coast tools help users turn data into powerful information that continues to increase the knowledge—the coastal intelligence—of our nation.

What is the Digital Coast Partnership?

The Digital Coast Partnership is a group of eight national organizations that work with NOAA to ensure coastal managers have the relevant data, tools, and information needed to make informed decisions about our nation's coastal resources.

Beyond ensuring that critical informational resources are available via the Digital Coast website, this partnership also works to unify groups that might not otherwise work together. The partnership supports events such as conferences, webinars, workshops, and meetings to give coastal professionals a forum to collaborate on key coastal issues. These issues include coastal resilience, ocean planning, and protecting and mapping coastal habitats. As a result, a strong alliance of coastal professionals is being established and nurtured.

The Digital Coast Partnership includes these organizations:
- American Planning Association
- Association of State Floodplain Managers
- Coastal States Organization
- National Association of Counties
- National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
- National States Geographic Information Council
- The Nature Conservancy
- Urban Land Institute
- NOAA

How does the Digital Coast differ from other federal efforts, such as Data.gov?

The main difference is the volume and type of content found on the sites. Data.gov is a federal website where a wide range of federal data is housed. Data.gov's main purpose is to give access to data, but it is up to the user to ensure that the data they discover are high quality and meet the needs of their issue.

Digital Coast is focused on national data in the coastal watersheds. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management has also taken the step to ensure that Digital Coast users can easily find authoritative, high-quality data and tools that allow for a more productive user experience to more directly help managers address complex coastal issues. Digital Coast multiplies its impact to regional and state coastal management efforts not by duplication, but by the very nature of this "make once and use many times" architecture structure. Surveys and the Digital Coast return on investment study have shown that by providing information in this manner, Digital Coast saves coastal managers and technicians one of their most valuable resources—time.

Why does the Digital Coast serve other agencies' data? Isn't that redundant?

Digital Coast is a one-stop shop for readily available coastal data and web-mapping services. Most users don't have the time or desire to search an array of vast sites to gather relevant data bit by bit. Compiling data sets from other agencies with one point of access saves users valuable time. In some cases, Digital Coast serves and extends data-hosting services to government agencies that don't have the resources or mission to present their data. It is "win-win" for the entire community.

What can the Digital Coast do for me?

The wealth and variety of data and tools currently available to coastal managers would have been hard to imagine only a few years ago. Today, finding the data or knowing which tool to use can be challenging. The Digital Coast provides an intuitive platform for accessing these data and tools and helps users understand how to use these powerful resources.

What do you have for my county, town, or area?

A number of products in the Digital Coast have placed-based information, which makes it easier to find localized data. Coastal County Snapshots and the Land Cover Atlas, available through the Tools section, provide county-level information and reports. The Data Access Viewer and Data Registry allow users to search for data in a specific geography. The Stories from the Field section provides examples of how coastal managers apply geospatial information to various management issues. MarineCadastre.gov National Viewer allows for quick viewing of offshore regions.

Can Digital Coast help me use tools and data in my work?

There are some 25 training courses available for classroom and online delivery. Some of these build participants' technical skills for working with the data and tools provided and others build capacity for the people side of coastal management, including integrating natural and social science into projects and decision-making. Digital Coast also includes dozens of recorded webinars and a variety of supporting resources, from guidance documents to case studies, showing users how to apply Digital Coast information. This suite of learning resources helps educate and build needed capacity that enables coastal audiences to work better and smarter.

Can you provide examples of Digital Coast content?
Content included in the Digital Coast can be used to address a number of key coastal and ocean issues. For example, those working on **coastal hazards and resilience** could consider these tools:

- Flood Exposure Coastal County Snapshots turn complex county-level data into easy-to-understand stories to help communities understand how to become more resilient.
- The Coastal Resilience Decision-Support Framework supports decisions to reduce the ecological and socioeconomic risks of coastal hazards.
- Port Resilience Planning Tool is used to help make freight transportation infrastructure more storm resistant.
- Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA) is used to help emergency responders and environmental resource managers deal with incidents that may adversely impact the environment, such as oil spills, chemical spills, and vessel groundings.
- Hurricane-Induced Coastal Erosion Hazards is an interactive map that shows users where hurricane-induced coastal erosion hazards exist in order to inform sand management decisions.

For those working on reducing their **flood risks**:

- Sea Level Rise Viewer to see coastal flooding scenarios for various locations.
- Coastal Inundation Toolkit to understand inundation issues and learn how to share information with stakeholders.
- Elevation data to create a local base map.
- Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper shows the people, places, and natural resources exposed to coastal flooding.

For those working on **green infrastructure**:

- Introducing Green Infrastructure for Coastal Resilience training course.
- Stories from the Field to see how coastal managers in Maryland are incorporating green infrastructure.
- Review the Publications section to learn how protecting natural lands and open space can reduce damages from flooding and also provide environmental and social benefit. An example is "The Role of Land Use in Adaptation to Increased Precipitation and Flooding."
- "Economic Assessment of Green Infrastructure Strategies for Climate Change Adaptation" to assess the costs and benefits of using green infrastructure for flood reduction.

For those working on **coastal and ocean habitat** related issues:

- Land Cover Atlas to see where wetland and forested areas are located in coastal counties.
- Habitat Priority Planner and its associated training course to help identify community areas to conserve or restore.
- Atlantic seagrass data sets to help analyze fishery habitats.

For those working on **coastal and ocean planning:**

- Examine commercial shipping paths and how endangered whale strikes might be reduced using the Automatic Identification System (AIS) data.
- Identify contacts and potential routes for sand resources by looking at Federal Agency regions and the spatial extent of state and federal jurisdiction.
- Open the raster nautical chart data to provide a quick informative base map for marine spatial planning.

- MarineCadastre.gov for data, tools, and resources on coastal and ocean planning.

For those working in **alternative energy**:
- Learn how offshore data can support development of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Atlantic electrical wind corridor.
- See the aesthetic impacts of offshore wind turbines in Lake Erie.

Check out the GeoZone Blog for answers to technical questions, post your question on one of our social media channels, Facebook or Twitter, or send an email inquiry to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov.

What are the future plans?
The NOAA Office for Coastal Management is continuing to incorporate more data and is working with constituent groups to understand additional information needs and skill gaps, as well as share additional examples of how existing information is being used. Future efforts include helping other groups expand the reach of their data by inclusion in the Digital Coast and expanding the use of their data through web services format.

How can I get involved in the Digital Coast?
A popular section of the Digital Coast highlights stories about how users have addressed coastal management issues using geospatial data, tools, and information. If you have a case study to share, send an e-mail to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov. We try to respond to all inquiries and suggestions within two business days.

Still have questions?
You can send questions directly to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov where you can expect a reply within two business days. And if you don't find what you're looking for on our site, let us know. Technical questions often end up being blog posts, so look there for information too.