



NOAA *Background*

“Working For America’s Coasts”: An Introduction to the National Ocean Service (NOAA Ocean Service)

The Coast: A Place to Live, Work and Play

The coastal environment is one of our nation’s most valuable assets. It provides food for people and essential habitat for thousands of species of marine animals and plants. A healthy coast is vital to the U.S. economy. Industries such as marine transportation, fishing, tourism and recreation, and homebuilding all depend on a

vibrant coastal environment. However, an ever-increasing, more concentrated population stresses the coast in many ways. The coast and its uses face threats from erosion, wetlands loss, limited access, pollution, over development and fierce storms.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation’s seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

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Valued by the Nation

The challenge to the nation and to the NOAA Ocean Service is to balance our use of coastal and ocean resources today with the need to protect, preserve and restore these priceless realms for future generations. NOAA Ocean Service serves the nation as part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA Ocean Service collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about coastal resource conditions, issues, and problems. The value of NOAA Ocean Service to the nation rests on its ability to carry out studies on a national scale, to sustain long-term monitoring assessment of natural resources, and to provide a variety of products and services.

NOAA Ocean Service evolved from the nation’s first scientific agency, the Survey of the Coast, which President Thomas Jefferson established in 1807 to chart the U.S. coast and its harbors. Then, as now, our growing nation needed accurate charts of the coast to promote commerce and safe navigation.

Today, NOAA Ocean Service is a diverse organization of scientists, natural resources managers and specialists in many different fields who contribute a wide range of skills and talents to ensure that our nation’s coastal areas remain safe, healthy, and productive.

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NOAA Ocean Service: Coastal Stewardship and Much More...

Imagine a future in which our coasts and oceans enjoy robust health, provide a rich bounty of resources, and are wisely managed to endure often competing uses. This vision is the inspiration for the NOAA Ocean Service, and the foundation for its primary goals:

Promote Safe Navigation: NOAA Ocean Service provides the nation with geo-spatial information that is necessary for safe and efficient commerce. NOAA Ocean Service supplies the nation with up-to-date digital and paper nautical charts, shoreline and airport surveys, and real-time water-level and current data. NOAA Ocean Service manages the National Spatial Reference System, which ensures the integrity and accuracy of coordinates for land surveying, transportation, mapping, construction and other uses of the Global Positioning System (GPS).

Sustain Coastal Habitat: Coastal habitats support more than 75 percent of our nation's commercial catch and 80 percent of our recreational catch of fish and shellfish. Escalating population growth and development along the coast have destroyed or degraded half of the habitat that is critical to marine life and to

the sustained vitality of our coastal economies. NOAA Ocean Service and its partners provide the scientific expertise and management capabilities needed by coastal managers to better tackle some of today's greatest natural resource challenges.

Support Coastal Communities: More than half of the nation's population lives and works within 50 miles of the coast, yet coastal areas account for only 11 percent of the nation's land mass. As commercial and residential development escalates and coastal communities continue to grow faster than inland communities, the natural resources that sustain their economic vitality are increasingly at risk. NOAA Ocean Service and its partners are helping to revitalize urban waterfronts, reduce damage from natural disasters, and promote economic growth.

Mitigate Coastal Hazards: The sea relentlessly erodes beaches, bluffs, and shorelines. Storms flood coastal areas. Hurricanes bring high winds, huge waves and powerful storm surges. Oil and chemical spills destroy wildlife, foul estuaries and beaches, damage habitat and jeopardize economic prosperity. Effective planning of coastal development will reduce the impacts of coastal hazards. NOAA Ocean Service provides information that helps coastal managers develop long-term plans for reducing the impacts of destructive events. ♻️

For more information contact NOAA Ocean Service Public Affairs at (301) 713-3070 or visit the Web site at <http://www.nos.noaa.gov>.