



# NERRA Policy Position

2/26/2006

## **LC-1. Coastal Zone Management Policy**

### **1.1 Preamble**

The nation's coastal areas contribute substantially to the U.S. economy. These areas contain over 50 percent of the U.S. population, many of the nation's largest cities, ports for maritime commerce, and support commercial and recreational fishing, recreational boating, and the tourism industry.

Considered to be among the most biologically productive ecosystems on Earth, healthy estuaries are essential to the preservation of robust coastal communities. Estuaries support vital nurseries for fish and shellfish and provide essential habitat for wildlife. The coastal zone is an important interface between upland land use and coastal resources. Growing population and development in the coastal zone is placing pressure on these valuable coastal and estuarine resources. NERRA has a great interest in ensuring the wise stewardship of the nation's coastal zone and furthering research and education to advance informed coastal management.

### **1.2 The Coastal Zone Management Act**

Through a unique federal-state partnership, the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972 provides for the comprehensive management and wise stewardship of the nation's coastal resources. The CZMA is the only national program that supports an integrated federal-state partnership to work with local coastal communities to administer programs that maximize both the economic and environmental benefits of coastal and ocean resources. The CZMA encourages coastal states to develop coastal management plans, which are reviewed and approved by the federal government. The federal role also includes financial assistance to states and the assurance of consistency of federal activities with approved state management plans. The CZMA established the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), a network of protected areas established for long-term research, education, and stewardship. The Reserves support coastal zone programs by providing the best available science through education programs aimed at those who make coastal resource decisions.

### **1.3 The National Estuarine Research Reserve System**

Established under section 315 of the CZMA, National Estuarine Research Reserves conduct integrated research, stewardship, and education to advance informed coastal management and

stewardship of our nation's estuaries and coasts. Through an effective partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) and the coastal states, the NERRS plays a critical role in sustaining the nation's estuaries and coastal communities. This state-based system enhances our understanding of estuaries, represents diverse biogeographic regions of the nation, and is a place where scientists, educators, and managers use research, education, and land acquisition to enhance our coastal zone.

## **1.4 Reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act**

Reauthorization of the CZMA provides an opportunity to strengthen the capabilities of coastal communities to address issues of coastal development, and to protect and restore coastal habitat. The reauthorization will increase the capacity of states to meet the challenges identified in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and the President's *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*. As the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy emphasized, reauthorization of the CZMA should strengthen the planning and coordination capabilities of coastal states to address coastal and ocean management issues. With growing populations and development in the nation's coastal zones, it will be essential to provide increased financial and technical assistance to states to work with coastal communities to manage growth.

**1.4.1 NERRS Research, Education, and Stewardship Mission.** Reauthorization of the CZMA provides the opportunity to broaden the authority of the NERRS to include education and resource stewardship—in addition to research—to ensure there is adequate authority for the NERRS to fully support the system's key programs, including: the Coastal Training Program; the System-wide Monitoring Program and coastal and ocean observing; Graduate Research Fellowships; and the K–12 Estuarine Education Program.

**1.4.2 Informed Decision-Making.** Of particular importance to NERRA is the framework provided by the CZMA to meet the need for informed decision-making at the federal, state, and local levels. To better inform decision-making, the CZMA should: provide effective mechanisms to assess the technology and information needs of coastal communities at local and regional scales; strengthen the capacity of the federal-state partnership to support research and monitoring relevant to local and regional needs; improve the access and delivery of science-based information to coastal communities; and evaluate the performance of the state-federal partnership in support of informed coastal decisions.

**1.4.3 Habitat Protection and Restoration.** NERRA believes that CZMA reauthorization should expand investment in the conservation and restoration of coastal habitats. Conservation and protection of lands is a central mission of the NERRS. To ensure that critical coastal habitat is protected, CZMA reauthorization should incorporate funding for NERRS construction and acquisition projects. The NERRS have established procedures for setting priorities for construction and land acquisition, and recently assembled long-term plans to meet construction and land acquisition needs. Incorporation of funds for these purposes into the CZMA will provide a stable, long-term source of funding for the NERRS to maintain facilities in support of research, education, and stewardship programs, as well as to acquire priority land from willing sellers for watershed management.

**1.4.4 Consistency Review.** Reauthorization of the CZMA should continue to support governmental coordination and consistency of federal activities that may affect state coastal resources with applicable, federally approved state coastal management policies, as provided in Section 307 of the CZMA.

**1.4.5 Coastal Community Assistance.** To aid states in addressing resource management issues, including habitat restoration, reduction of coastal nonpoint pollution, and well-planned community development, the CZMA should expand authority and funding to support coastal community assistance grants. This would provide critical resources to: increase public access and waterfront revitalization; protect cultural and historic resources; conserve and restore habitat; mitigate coastal hazards; control aquatic invasive species; and reduce hypoxia, harmful algal blooms, and polluted runoff.

**1.4.6 Regional Collaborations.** The CZMA can provide additional support for state-regional collaborations that identify priority coastal management issues and develop implementation strategies. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and President's *U.S. Ocean Action Plan* call for regional, ecosystem-based management strategies and regional pilot projects that build on existing processes.

## **1.5 Provide for Adequate Federal Funding**

As population and development along the nation's coasts continues to rise, increased funding will be required to fully address the complex problems facing the coastal zone. Additional states have recently begun participating in the Coastal Zone Management Program and additional National Estuarine Research Reserves have been designated or are in the designation process. Providing the coastal management framework and education and research opportunities to additional states will contribute to healthy coastal communities, responsible planning, and improved water quality and coastal habitats. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System and Coastal Zone Management Programs are cost-effective programs and federal funding goes even further by being matched by state funding. NERRA believes it is crucial that Congress provide stable and adequate funding to help the National Estuarine Research Reserves and coastal states to better address growing challenges to our nation's estuaries and coasts.

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