

# Final Evaluation Findings

## Alabama Coastal Management Program

December 2007 to August 2016

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## Summary of Findings

The Coastal Zone Management Act requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct periodic evaluations of the performance of states and territories with federally approved coastal management programs. This evaluation examined the operation and management of the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program, administered by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, for the period from December 2007 to August 2016. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is the designated lead agency. The evaluation focused on three target areas: program administration, state and local partnerships, and the coastal nonpoint pollution control program.

The findings in this evaluation document will be considered by NOAA in making future financial award decisions concerning the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program. The evaluation came to these conclusions:

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program has contributed significant staff effort and knowledge to the state's Deepwater Horizon clean-up response, Natural Resource Damage Assessment, and recovery planning.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program's partnerships with local communities result in enhanced public access to the coast, improved stormwater management, local redevelopment plans and comprehensive plans that promote sustainable economic development and public access to the coast, and a streamlined permitting process.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program is a national leader in promoting the use of living shorelines and has developed guidance for local governments and homeowners to encourage the use of living shorelines to protect both the shoreline and coastal habitat. The coastal program partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Mobile District and others to develop the Alabama Living Shorelines General Permit, which served as a model for a new Nationwide Permit B for Living Shorelines.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program's new Alabama Coastal and Marine Planning tool provides user-friendly access to valuable coastal information that aids coastal decision makers in identifying and mitigating potential marine resource user conflicts.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program has worked to build capacity and partnerships to develop sustainable programs that may help address the remaining conditions on its Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program, for example, the development of the Coastal Alabama Onsite Sewage Distribution System Inspection and Maintenance Program. The coastal program has also supported local governments in their efforts to improve stormwater management through improved planning and regulations.

**Necessary Action:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program must work with the NOAA Office for Coastal Management to develop and submit a work plan with interim benchmarks and

a timeline for meeting the outstanding conditions of its conditionally approved coastal nonpoint source pollution program by November 30, 2017. The documentation indicating how Alabama has met the outstanding conditions must be submitted no later than May 31, 2022.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program in its efforts to collect coastal data and to develop and maintain tools to improve access to coastal data to inform coastal decision makers and the public.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program to develop an online one-stop shop for local governments and other interested stakeholders to bring together in one place planning and policy guidance on coastal issues such as living shorelines and low-impact-development that was developed with the financial or technical support of the coastal program.

**Recommendation:** The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program to continue its work in supporting local government efforts to plan, improve regulations, and implement low-impact development techniques to address coastal nonpoint source pollution.

This evaluation concludes that the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program is successfully implementing and enforcing its federally approved coastal management program, adhering to the terms of the federal financial assistance awards, and addressing coastal management needs identified in section 303(2)(A) through (K) of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

## Program Review Procedures

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) evaluated the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program in fiscal year 2016. The evaluation team consisted of Carrie Hall, evaluation team lead; Hank Hodde, site liaison; Todd Davison, Southern region director; and Rebecca Prado, deputy director of the Florida Coastal Office. The support of Alabama Coastal Area Management Program staff members was crucial in conducting the evaluation, and their support is most gratefully acknowledged.

NOAA sent a notification of the scheduled evaluation to the director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' commissioner of conservation, published a notice of "Intent to Evaluate" in the *Federal Register* on June 22, 2016, and notified members of Alabama's congressional delegation. The coastal program posted a notice of the public meeting and opportunity to comment in the *AL.com—Press-Register* on June 26, 2016.

The evaluation process included a review of relevant documents and a survey of stakeholders, which helped identify three target areas for the evaluation: program administration, state and local partnerships, and the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program. A site visit was conducted, and the evaluation team held meetings with staff members and group discussions with stakeholders and program staff members about the target areas. In addition, a public meeting was held on Wednesday, August 10, at 5:30 p.m. Eastern time at the Five Rivers-Alabama Delta Resource Center, 30945 Five Rivers Boulevard, Spanish Fort, Alabama, to provide an opportunity for members of the public to express their opinions about the implementation of the program. Stakeholders and members of the public were also given the opportunity to provide written comments. No written comments were received. NOAA then developed draft evaluation findings, which were provided to the coastal program for review, and the coastal program's comments were considered in drafting the final evaluation findings.

Final evaluation findings for all coastal management programs highlight the program's accomplishments in the target areas and include recommendations, which are of two types.

**Necessary Actions** address programmatic requirements of implementing regulations of the Coastal Zone Management Act and of the state coastal management program approved by NOAA. These must be carried out by the date specified. Failure to address necessary actions may result in a future finding of non-adherence and the invoking of interim sanctions, as specified in the Coastal Zone Management Act §312(c).

**Recommendations** are actions that the office believes would improve the program but which are not mandatory. The state is expected to have considered the recommendations by the time of the next evaluation or dates specified.

## **Evaluation Findings**

### **Program Administration**

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Alabama Department of Environmental Management are responsible for implementing the state's approved coastal management program. The Department of Environmental Management is responsible for the regulatory and permitting functions, while the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is the lead agency with the administrative responsibility for managing the annual cooperative agreement with NOAA and functions including policy development, planning, and education and outreach.

### ***Cooperative Agreements***

The Department of Environmental Management and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are working well together to implement the coastal program and have been developing their annual Coastal Zone Management Act cooperative agreements in a timely manner. The departments have successfully addressed a program suggestion in the previous evaluation to improve coordination on cooperative agreement development.

The coastal program has the capacity and knowledge to manage federal assistance awards well, and the coastal program expends funds in a timely manner with few requests for award extensions and reprogramming. The grants manager regularly participates in NOAA's annual Grant and Cooperative Agreements trainings, ensuring that the coastal program is aware of the latest federal and NOAA guidance.

### ***Staffing***

The coastal program has had stable long-term leadership, and a number of stakeholders cited this continuity as valuable. In addition, stakeholders also appreciated that the coastal program had a number of knowledgeable long-term staff members. During the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, coastal program leadership and staff members, through their extensive knowledge of activities in coastal Alabama, were able to help avoid duplication of effort and provide an understanding of what was done, or not, in the past and why. For example, maps developed as part of the Atlas of Coastal Alabama Marinas and Watersheds project provided critical information to responders in 2010 during the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.

Stakeholders who the evaluation team met with raised turnover in permitting staff as an issue, since staff turnover in this area is higher because of the existence of a number of higher paying jobs outside of state employment. They also noted that they would like to see an increase in staff to enable quicker review of permits. Stakeholders though stated that permitting staff members did a good job within their limitations. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has seen a reduction of 1.5 staff members over the evaluation period. At the time of the site visit they had recently hired a natural resource planner, a position that had been vacant over a year.

The coastal program staff at both departments are already operating at full capacity and will be

taking on more responsibilities as Deepwater Horizon restoration activities increase. The coastal program will likely need more planners and permitting staff to address these additional responsibilities. Without additional staff, implementation of the coastal program will likely be impacted.

### ***Deepwater Horizon***

In April 2010, the largest oil spill in U.S. history occurred in the Gulf of Mexico from an uncontrolled blowout at an oil well drilled by the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig. Coastal program staff members from both the Department of Environmental Management and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources have been involved in the clean-up response and Natural Resource Damage Assessment. Response-related activities are now winding down, except for the chronic deposition of tar balls on Gulf-fronting beaches, and staff are now actively engaged in restoration activities. Coastal program staff members are heavily involved with planning efforts for both RESTORE and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funding. Deepwater Horizon restoration funding provides a unique opportunity to conduct restoration work and research to identify the best long-term restoration and management practices for the Gulf coast.

### ***Program Changes and Program Document***

The coastal program has successfully addressed the two necessary actions in the previous 2008 Final Evaluation Findings to update and clarify the program. First, the coastal program provided the required information to NOAA and submitted routine program changes to incorporate into the federally approved program a) the updated Department of Environmental Management Division 8 regulations and b) state executive order transferring coastal lead agency authority from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. NOAA approved these routine program changes on December 10, 2010, June 25, 2012, and December 18, 2013. The coastal program also addressed a second necessary action to clarify and update the coastal program. In a letter dated November 15, 2010, the coastal program informed NOAA that it would not pursue inclusion of any additional or new policies or regulations. In addition, the coastal program chose to address the necessary action through the updating of its program document, also a recommendation in the 2008 Final Evaluation Findings. The program document was updated and on January 25, 2017, it was submitted to NOAA as a routine program change. NOAA approved the incorporation of the changes as non-enforceable policies of the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program on February 24, 2017.

### ***Federal Consistency Implementation and Permitting***

The coastal program has worked to improve collaboration and communication among its federal consistency partners at local, state, and federal levels. The strengthening of communication and coordination has allowed the partners to provide consistent guidance to applicants and their consultants, increasing efficiency and confidence in the consistency process. Previously, applicants or their consultants would often make separate inquiries or submit variable project designs to the local, state, and federal agencies involved in the process, which at times resulted in conflicting guidance from different agencies. The improved coordination across partners has

allowed the agencies to provide consistent advice and reduce uncertainty for applicants.

Recently, coastal program staff members proposed semi-regular informal meetings with Army Corps of Engineers administration and staff to identify areas for improved coordination. At a meeting, coastal program and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff members discussed modifying the corps' acknowledgment letters (sent to applicants requesting federal permits) to include the Department of Environmental Management as a courtesy recipient. This action helps close the information gap created when an applicant fails to send a copy of the consistency certification to the Department of Environmental Management as required by 15 C.F.R. § 930.57.

The coastal program also took a leadership role in the state to develop a streamlined permitting process for aquaculture. The new process resulted in reduced lease prices per acre for those engaged in aquaculture; to date, there are 13 new oyster farms operating in Alabama coastal waters. Stakeholders also cited the program for working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to address building permits for lots on Highway 1. Previously, owners were required to obtain costly variances; now under Nationwide Permit 18, owners are able to obtain a permit for a house without a variance.

Stakeholders consistently described coastal program permitting staff as fair and consistent. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff described staff as proactive and expressed appreciation for the coastal program's work in facilitating coordination with local governments.

The Department of Environmental Management and federal agencies cooperate to monitor authorized federal license and permit activities. The coastal program is a member of a South Alabama Environmental Crimes Taskforce, which includes representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Environmental Protection Agency. Members meet quarterly with the U.S. Department of Justice's U.S. assistant attorney to discuss current relevant events, including those related to non-compliance matters associated with coastal zone management-type regulated activities.

Coastal program staff members and local community staff members routinely inspected sites, projects, and activities for compliance with nonregulated use permit conditions as well as compliance with the Department of Environmental Management Division 8 Coastal Program Regulations. Stakeholders who the evaluation team met with noted that some contractors choose to ignore regulations and ask for forgiveness later. The coastal program may wish to pursue additional penalties as provided for in the regulations in cases of repeat violators.

### ***Coastal Construction Control Line***

The coastal program regulation 335-8-2.08, Construction and Other Activities on Gulf Front Beaches and Dunes, is a state regulation that is meant to provide for the long-term protection of the beach dune system and to limit development seaward of the dunes. The regulation does not allow construction of new structures (motels, condominiums, houses, buildings, etc.) and substantial improvements to existing structures on, beneath, or above the surface of any land located between mean high tide and the coastal construction control line, which is defined in the



regulations and delineated largely in state plane coordinates. The width of this shorefront no-build area varies along the coast. A variance may be granted where an applicant demonstrates that the requirement is unduly restrictive or constitutes a taking of property without compensation.

The development of the coastal construction control line regulations did not take into account erosion, and currently there are areas where the coastal construction control line is located in the water, particularly along the Dauphin Island coast. Currently, there is no process to regularly update the coastal construction control line and take into account erosion. In areas where the coastal construction control line is located in the water, the state no longer has regulatory authority under coastal program regulation 335-8-2.08 to protect the beach dune system and direct development to lower risk areas. It is possible, if future large-scale beach renourishment is completed, that the coastal construction control line may once again encompass the beach dune system in these areas.

### ***Coastal Resources Advisory Committee***

The Coastal Resources Advisory Committee was created by the Alabama Environmental Management Act of 1982. The group's statutory function is to advise the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Management on all matters concerning the coastal area and the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program. Committee members the evaluation team met with stated they valued the committee since it helped them keep in touch with what was going on (especially valuable for those members not deeply engaged with other partners on projects) and network with committee members, and they appreciated the budget overview. A committee member also noted that it had been a valuable tool for information sharing between agencies and to report and ask questions during the oil spill. The member also noted that the committee had recently submitted a letter of support for a Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve land acquisition project. Staff also noted that there was value in reporting on their projects to the wider committee. Challenges cited by committee members were turnover and the challenge of keeping members engaged when they were already meeting through other venues. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue to consider how to most effectively utilize the Coastal Resources Advisory Committee and to identify the specific purposes for gathering the advisory committee. The coastal program may wish to consider engaging NOAA Office for Coastal Management facilitation expertise in this effort.

### ***Communication of Successes***

The coastal program often works through partnerships to complete projects and initiatives, and the program is split between two agencies, which adds to the challenge of raising the visibility of the coastal program's many successes. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to communicate the program's success stories at the local, state, regional, and federal levels. This would both promote information transfer to other programs and partners as well as raise the visibility of the coastal program. The coastal program is working toward increasing its visibility within Outdoor Alabama media with the development of searchable public-access information. The coastal program could also pursue other opportunities with the

Outdoor Alabama communications department or other venues to highlight the program's significant accomplishments.

### ***Findings for Program Administration***

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program has contributed significant staff effort and knowledge to the state's Deepwater Horizon clean-up response, Natural Resource Damage Assessment, and recovery planning.

## **State and Local Partnerships**

### ***Local Governments***

#### *Overview*

The coastal management program works closely with Alabama's two coastal counties and municipal governments. The coastal program has a Coastal Resource Improvement Program that provides funding to local governments for projects that focus on government coordination and local government planning; coastal hazards and resilient communities; coastal habitats, wetland protection, and coastal resource stewardship; coastal nonpoint source pollution control; and public access. In addition, coastal program staff members provide technical expertise to help local communities with planning and other projects. The evaluation team had the opportunity to meet with staff members from two coastal communities, the City of Orange Beach and City of Gulf Shores, to hear more about how the state and local governments work together to implement Alabama's coastal program. Staff members from both local governments highlighted that small grants can serve as "catalysts" leading to very significant improvements and that coastal program grants were often key to gaining local elected official's support for projects.

The coastal program also provides funding to the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission to support the commission's efforts to assist local communities in developing and updating comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. The Department of Environmental Management has a staff member who works closely with local communities to support their implementation of the coastal program's enforceable policies relative to construction on Gulf of Mexico-fronting beaches and dunes.

#### *City of Orange Beach and City of Gulf Shores*

The City of Orange Beach has benefited from the ongoing support of the coastal program from both the Department of Environmental Management and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which provide seed funding and technical support for a variety of projects, initiatives, and permitting. The city was able to complete a property acquisition plan and received funding through the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to acquire land for public access and habitat protection. The city also built a local canoe trail with 13 launch sites with the support of a coastal program public access grant.

The city completed a watershed plan with financial assistance from a coastal program planning grant that resulted in the city adopting the first local wetland ordinance in Alabama. The city also received a grant to develop the Canal Road Stormwater Management Plan, and the coastal

program assisted the city in identifying funding sources for the next step in the project, modeling the hydrology.

**EXAMPLE: LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS**

*Both the City of Orange Beach and City of Gulf Shores have implemented a Leave Only Footprints campaign to address increasing amounts of unsightly debris on the beach and marine environment. Both cities passed ordinances requiring beachgoers to remove their belongings from the beach at night. The cities have hired crews to comb the beaches at night and remove any abandoned items. The cities engaged in extensive outreach campaigns and met with business leaders and rental property managers along the coast to inform them of the proposal and gain their support. Magnets and stickers and other outreach materials were created and provided to locals and visitors to remind them to pack up their belongings at night. The clean beaches have also benefited sea turtles, with 2016 being a record year for sea turtle nesting. The coastal program supported the town's implementation of the initiative and provided funding for project outreach materials and recycling equipment.*

The City of Gulf Shores has also greatly benefited from its partnership with the coastal program. The city built two Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible dune walkover projects at 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> streets with support from coastal program grants. The town added public parking near the walkovers to improve public access. In addition, the town also restored the dunes with plantings and fencing, and the endangered beach mouse has now returned to the area. City staff members noted that the feedback from the public was very positive.

A coastal program planning grant helped catalyze the Gulf Shores Waterway Village project, which received an Alabama America Planning Association outstanding project award in 2014. The city received a grant to develop a master plan for the area, tying the town to the beach as part of an effort to revitalize the area. The village is envisioned as a pedestrian- and bike-friendly beach district with a downtown mixed-use area that capitalizes on the area's working waterfront history and heritage. The city has begun to construct public infrastructure, including parking, sidewalks, and streetscape improvements.

*Delegation of Authority to Local Governments*

As of 2014, local governments have been delegated the authority to manage construction activities in their respective communities along the entirety of Alabama's Gulf-fronting beaches. Delegated programs serve as the one point of contact for the public and are responsible for coordinating with the state and federal agencies. Both state and local government staff members stated that the delegation of authority helped streamline the permitting process. If a local government has not been delegated authority, the local government must wait for the state to make a permitting decision before having the local building department review the permit for consistency with the locality's Federal Emergency Management Agency-approved building code. In the past, there were occasions where the local government needed to require design changes and modification of the previously approved state permit.

Cooperative agreements are in place between the Department of Environmental Management

and each of the local governments. The department provides local communities with financial support, and a technical advisor works with communities on a daily basis. To ensure consistency with interpretation and application of regulations governing construction and other activities on Gulf-front beaches across jurisdictions, the technical advisor meets regularly with local government staff members and participates in council meetings, as well as city, town, and county department head meetings. The technical advisor's extensive interaction has brought much more visibility of coastal regulations. The technical advisor is also able to serve on local working groups and task forces focused on coastal-related issues.

The technical advisor is highly regarded by local government staff members. The technical advisor's early input into projects has helped guide local governments towards approvable project designs, saving time and money. Local government staff members also valued the department's assistance during the oil spill, and they continue to work closely with the Department of Environmental Management and the U.S. Coast Guard to monitor tar balls. State staff members also described the relationship as mutually beneficial since staff members at each of the local government's building and inspection departments actively participate in the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program's beach and dune rules while they go about their administrative duties.

#### *Public Access*

The coastal program supports enhancing and increasing public access to the coast, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources directs 10 percent of its 306 funding to local and state governments and academic institutions for the construction of low-cost public access projects. The coastal program chose public access as one of three evaluation metrics for the period 2012-2017 and set a target of five public access sites to be restored, created, or enhanced with technical or financial assistance from the coastal program. The coastal program has greatly surpassed this initial target and has restored, created, or enhanced 19 public access sites. Examples of projects include funding for interpretive signage at the 500-acre Graham Creek Nature Preserve, where visitors can kayak, walk on ADA-accessible trails, and see rare carnivorous plants and wildflowers, and funding for a 3-mile trail system, recently designated as a national recreation trail, within the 137-acre Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary.

The coastal program maintains an inventory of coastal public access sites and is in the process of expanding the existing Outdoor Alabama Pocket Guide mobile application to include coastal public access sites and to create its own GIS-based application. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program in its efforts to make this public access site information more broadly and easily available. In addition, the program should also consider making blueway trail information available through the Outdoor Alabama website and through mobile applications. Another opportunity mentioned by several stakeholders was to play a coordinating role across the state's coast in building a trans-Gulf blueway trail. The coastal program may wish to directly support this effort with staff time or funding, or encourage or partner with another group, such as Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau's Sustainable Tourism Initiative, to connect and expand existing blueway trails.

### ***Regional and National Partnerships***

The coastal program is actively engaged and providing leadership in numerous partnerships across the Gulf region that support coastal management. In addition, the chief of the Coastal Section of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has also provided leadership at the national level, serving as chair of the Coastal States Organization and Gulf of Mexico Executive Committee member.

#### *The Gulf of Mexico Alliance*

The coastal program has provided significant leadership and support to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, a state-led, Gulf-wide network of partners working together to ensure healthy and resilient coasts. Coastal program staff members have served in leadership roles at the management and team levels. One key effort in which the program has taken a leadership role is the beneficial use of sediments from dredging activities. The alliance's Habitat Conservation and Resources Team developed the Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan, a collection of products to guide more effective management of sediment resources in the Gulf for habitat conservation and restoration, as well as coastal community resilience. The plan includes the latest science and knowledge regarding regional sediment processes and sediment resources and ecological considerations, discusses information and data management, provides a basis for matching sediment resources with conservation and restoration needs, and discusses agency authorities, policies, and funding related to sediment management. The coastal program staff serves as the state lead for the Education and Engagement Team which includes chairing monthly calls of the team and providing overall guidance. The report also provides a series of recommendations to improve sediment management. The coastal program also served as the state's lead in providing staffing and financial support for the development of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Action Plan III for Healthy and Resilient Coasts 2016-2021. The action plan lays out the six priority issues and three cross-team initiatives that the five Gulf states and Gulf-wide network of partners will be working on for the next five years.

#### *Mobile Bay National Estuary Program*

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program brings together a large number of partners to work on improving Mobile Bay. The coastal program participated in a large-scale planning effort with the estuary program to develop the national estuary program's Comprehensive and Conservation Management Plan (2013-1018), which is based on citizen input of what people value most and what concerns them most about living in coastal Alabama. The coastal program is supporting the implementation of this plan by setting one of its three five-year Section 312 performance measure targets as completing 25 activities that implement the plan's strategies. In just four years, the coastal program has exceeded this target and supported the completion of 27 activities, including coastal habitat restoration monitoring; stormwater studies; local government comprehensive plan development; low-impact development planning; beach management plan development; public access projects such as boardwalks, kayak launches, and an outdoor classroom; and water-quality monitoring.

The coastal program has also been very engaged in the national estuary program's effort to

develop watershed management plans to preserve water quality and mitigate the impacts of future development pressures. The watershed planning process uses a stakeholder-led process to characterize existing conditions, identify and prioritize problems, define management objectives, and develop and implement protection or remediation strategies as necessary. Coastal program staff members have participated in the steering committees of the four completed watershed management plans, and coastal program funding can be used by communities to help implement the plans. Communities are also working to align their watershed plans with their comprehensive plans; the coastal program can provide technical and financial support for these efforts as well. Staff members also participate on the Project Implementation Team, which oversees many of the national estuary program funded projects.

### ***Initiatives and Projects with Partners***

#### ***Integrated Coastal Alabama Comprehensive Habitat Restoration Program and Marine Spatial Planning***

The coastal program's 2011-2015 Section 309 Assessment and Strategies had two strategies that focused on data collection and planning: Integrated Coastal Alabama Comprehensive Habitat Restoration Program and Coastal Area and Marine Spatial Planning. The coastal program partnered with the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to update and revise the Gulf Ecological Management Site (GEMS) list. The Gulf Ecological Management Site Program is an initiative administered through the Gulf of Mexico Foundation to identify and make available maps of geographic areas of special ecological significance for the continued production of fish, wildlife and other natural resources. A steering committee composed of federal, state, county, and nongovernmental organizations granted Gulf Ecological Management Site status to eight areas in coastal Alabama. A final report, *Gulf Ecological Management Sites of Coastal Alabama (2013)*, was published, and for each site an ArcGIS shapefile was created and fact sheet developed. At this time, further implementation of the initiative is unfunded.

With the coastal and marine spatial mapping initiative, the coastal program set out to increase understanding of coastal resources and processes and provide a tool for coastal managers for visualizing coastal and marine habitat and uses for the purpose of determining potential conflicts of use or regulatory hurdles during the planning phase. A steering committee of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, including the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and Alabama Geological Survey, was established, existing data compiled, and priority data gaps identified. The coastal program provided financial support for collecting high-need data, including mapping of submerged aquatic vegetation and mapping of the shoreline. The coastal program also supported a cultural resource survey of important water bottoms in Mississippi Sound and Portersville Bay to inform future shoreline restoration and off-bottom oyster aquaculture siting. In partnership with Auburn University, the coastal program and partners created the Alabama Coastal Marine Planning Tool, a GIS-based mapping tool to visualize the data.

The coastal program has held several workshops to inform regulators, coastal managers, and stakeholders about the data and tool. The coastal program is also working with the Weeks Bay Coastal Training program to host a workshop in 2017 to introduce stakeholders to the online viewer and updated GIS inventory of resources. The coastal program has also provided support to

local governments to build their GIS capacity, and recently a South Alabama GIS user group was initiated to build on existing efforts.

### *Living Shorelines*

The coastal program is a national leader in facilitating the implementation of living shorelines, developing guidance for both local governments and homeowners, and working with stakeholders to streamline the permitting process. The coastal program partnered with the national estuary program to develop and publish, *Living Shorelines: A Guide for Alabama Property Owners (2014)*, which is available on the national estuary program's website. The guidance document discusses different living shoreline options, the regulatory framework, project costs, and native planting recommendations, and provides permitting guidance and reasons that a homeowner might choose a living shoreline. In partnership with Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant and others, a guidance manual for local community consideration was developed, *Coastal Alabama Living Shorelines Policies, Rules, and Model Ordinance Manual*. The manual lays out the regulatory framework, design, and permitting challenges, and provides model living shoreline ordinances.

The coastal program also worked to make permitting the installation of living shorelines as easy as, or easier than, installation of a bulkhead. The Department of Environmental Management found that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide 13 Permit for bulkheads was not consistent with the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program making it unavailable as a streamlined permit option for projects in the Coastal Area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers–Mobile District worked with the coastal program and other resource agencies to develop and approve an Alabama Living Shorelines General Permit in 2011 to streamline the process for project approval and completion. The installation of living shorelines provides protection for property while providing for preservation and restoration of dunes, beaches, wetlands, and submersed grass beds; protection of essential fish habitat; and shoreline restoration. The general permit served as a model for the new U.S Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit B for Living Shorelines that was proposed in 2016.

Although the coastal program has made tremendous progress in moving living shorelines forward as an option for stabilizing shorelines, the concept of living shorelines is still relatively new, and there is still a need to provide outreach and education, particularly to contractors involved in bulkhead or living shoreline construction. The coastal program has worked with the Weeks Bay Coastal Training Program to provide a number of workshops on green infrastructure. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue to work with partners to provide outreach and education on living shorelines and support research on living shorelines and dissemination of the results.

### *Community Resilience Initiative*

The coastal program initiated a new Section 309 strategy in 2015 to improve the resilience of local communities. The strategy focuses on working with local governments within Mobile and Baldwin Counties to encourage communities to become active and improve their score in the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System. The Community Rating System is

a voluntary incentive program that encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum National Flood Insurance Program requirements and recognizes the reduced risk through reduced premiums for homeowners.

#### *Alabama Coastal Comprehensive Plan*

The coastal program and other partners are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers–Mobile District in the development of an Alabama Coastal Comprehensive Plan. The plan is an initiative of the state’s governor and modeled on a plan developed by Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina. The plan’s purpose is to develop a constituent-informed, science-based coastal comprehensive plan to strengthen the economic, environmental, and social resilience of Mobile and Baldwin Counties. The coastal program helped support the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Mobile Bay National Estuary Program in conducting a series of focus groups to gather public input to be used in the plan’s development. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff members stated that they relied on the coastal program and national estuary program to engage the public in the planning process. Input into the plan was sought from state and federal agencies, elected officials, and resource-dependent environmental, tourism, business, transportation, and academic groups to identify a current, future, and desired vision that reflects the resources and assets important to the community. The plan will enable the state to identify vulnerabilities and provide a framework to increase economic benefits while balancing environmental and community resilience. The plan will classify current environmental resources along the coast; forecast changes due to sea level rise, flooding, and inundation; identify communities’ storm risks and coastal insurance concerns; identify commercial and recreational fishing needs and sustainability pressures; forecast population pressures and business needs associated with regional economic growth; and recognize areas where academic research would serve future generations.

#### *Trash Cleanup and Awareness*

The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is the Coastal Section’s largest public participation project, with more than 5,000 volunteers taking part annually. The outreach coordinator is the state coordinator for the cleanup, working with sponsors, zone captains, and volunteers throughout the coastal counties to engage local citizens in removing trash and debris from beaches and waterways, while also encouraging a change in the behaviors that cause pollution. Preparation for the cleanup includes outreach and educational efforts that promote the cleanup, as well as educating the public on coastal resources and the harmful effects of trash on these resources. A number of stakeholders noted that the annual coastal cleanup has helped get the public involved and raised awareness of coastal issues. The annual coastal cleanup has the highest volunteer turnout of any volunteer event in the state.

#### *Data and Information Accessibility*

The coastal program has invested significant effort over the evaluation period in collecting data and serving it in a useable format for coastal stakeholders. The new Alabama Coastal and Marine Planning Tool provides user-friendly access to coastal information. Coastal decision makers can use the tool to identify and mitigate potential user conflicts, and the public can use the tool to



explore the Alabama coast's natural and physical infrastructure.

In addition, the coastal program is working on making its public access data accessible to the public in a user-friendly format. The coastal program has supported the Alabama Geological Survey in the collection of shoreline data that has the potential to be very useful to coastal managers, but the information is not easily accessible through an online mapping application. Several stakeholders noted the need to make more data available in a more user-friendly format, and for a compilation of historical wetland information in a user-friendly format. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program in its efforts to develop and provide data to inform coastal managers and encourages the program to work with partners to support public access to data and information through user-friendly applications.

The coastal program, including both the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Department of Environmental Management, has taken a lead role in developing guidance and model ordinances for emerging issues such as low-impact development and living shorelines and, going forward, will be working with local communities to assist them with joining the Community Rating System and improving their scores. Currently, coastal planning and policy guidance of value to local governments is located on different agency and stakeholder websites. The team observed that local governments might not be aware of existing guidance or where to find information they had heard about. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to expand its existing website to provide this information, or to work with other partners such as the South Alabama Regional Planning Council, Sea Grant, or the national estuary program to develop an online one-stop shop for the latest coastal planning and policy information. At a minimum, planning and policy guidance and information that the coastal program and Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is involved in developing could be included. The coastal program might also consider restarting the Coastal Planners Users Group as a method of sharing information.

The coastal program also works closely with the Weeks Bay Coastal Training Program and others to provide training to coastal managers on issues of concern, such as living shorelines. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue its efforts to provide education, outreach, and training on coastal management issues.

### ***Findings for State and Local Partnerships***

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program's partnerships with local communities result in enhanced public access to the coast, improved stormwater management, local redevelopment plans and comprehensive plans that promote sustainable economic development and public access to the coast, and a streamlined permitting process.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program is a national leader in promoting the use of living shorelines and has developed guidance for local governments and homeowners to encourage the use of living shorelines to protect both the shoreline and coastal habitat. The coastal program partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Mobile District and others to develop the Alabama Living Shorelines General Permit, which served as a model for

a new Nationwide Permit B for Living Shorelines.

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program's new Alabama Coastal and Marine Planning tool provides user-friendly access to valuable coastal information that aids coastal decision makers in identifying and mitigating potential marine resource user conflicts.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program in its efforts to collect coastal data and to develop and maintain tools to improve access to coastal data to inform coastal decision makers and the public.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program to develop an online one-stop shop for local governments and other interested stakeholders to bring together in one place planning and policy guidance on coastal issues such as living shorelines and low-impact-development that was developed with the financial or technical support of the coastal program.

## **Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program**

### ***Program Status***

The Department of Environmental Management is the state's designated agency responsible for implementing the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program under the Clean Water Act and is the lead in implementing the state's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program under the Coastal Zone Management Act and Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources also provides both technical and financial support to projects that support the state's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program.

In accordance with Section 6217 of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990, all states with federally approved coastal programs must develop comprehensive coastal nonpoint pollution control programs (coastal nonpoint programs). These programs must be developed and implemented in accordance with guidance by NOAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Under the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990, if NOAA and the Environmental Protection Agency find that a state has failed to submit an approvable program, the federal agencies must withhold funding for the state coastal management program under Section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act and Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Ensuring that all states fully satisfy their coastal nonpoint program requirements under the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990 and Coastal Zone Management Act to maintain full funding of their coastal management programs is important. Since the Section 312 evaluation process is designed to assess how well the state is meeting its coastal nonpoint program requirements and carrying out the goals and objectives of the Coastal Zone Management Act, which include protecting water quality, NOAA uses the evaluation process to assess a state coastal management program's progress in meeting coastal nonpoint program requirements.

The State of Alabama initially submitted program documentation for its coastal nonpoint

program in August 1995, and additional supplemental material was provided following the initial program submittal. After carefully reviewing Alabama's coastal nonpoint program submission to evaluate the extent to which Alabama's program conforms to the requirements of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments, NOAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved Alabama's program, with conditions, on June 30, 1998. The conditions outlined actions the state needed to take to fully satisfy all Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendment requirements and receive full approval of its coastal nonpoint program. In the early 2000s, the Alabama Coastal Program submitted additional information addressing the remaining conditions. In November 2004, NOAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sent Alabama an informal interim decision document advising the state on 19 recommended actions relating to the remaining six conditions necessary to gain full approval. NOAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continue to work with Alabama to address its remaining conditions.

### **Overview**

The Department of Environmental Management has supported the development and implementation of 26 projects during the evaluation period, with products related to coastal water quality that may help address the state's 19 recommended actions. In addition, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provides technical assistance to local communities and financial assistance through the Coastal Resource Improvement Program grants for projects that address local needs, including improving stormwater management and water quality. The projects have engaged a wide variety of partners in working towards improving water quality including local cities and counties, soil and water conservation districts, Alabama Coastal Foundation, Alabama Marine Police, Auburn University, Alabama Forestry Commission, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Mobile and Baldwin County Health Departments. During the evaluation period, progress towards full approval of the coastal nonpoint program was slowed by Hurricanes Katrina and Ivan and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as staff focused on recovery efforts. However, while it appears the state has done a lot of work to further the development of its coastal nonpoint program during this review period, the state has not formally submitted many of these efforts in support of its program. Therefore, NOAA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have not been able to evaluate much progress the state has truly made toward addressing its remaining coastal nonpoint program conditions.

The state's point person for the coastal nonpoint program has chaired the Coastal States Organization's Coastal Nonpoint Source Work Group since its inception. The work group allows coastal program staff members from different states to share information and move their programs forward toward approval. In addition, he also participates on numerous federal, state, and local working groups and assists with relevant coastal resource and restoration projects, as well as developing and supporting public education and training efforts.

### **Example Projects**

*Coastal Alabama Onsite Sewage Distribution System Inspection and Maintenance Program*

The coastal program has undertaken strategic multi-year efforts to build ongoing capacity to address the remaining conditions on its program, including the condition for New and Operating Onsite Sewage Distribution Systems. In 2004, Section 309 funds were awarded to the Mobile County Health Department and the Alabama Department of Public Health (for Baldwin County) to enhance their ability to monitor and track septic systems. Each county began to collect GPS readings during permitting and inspection site visits as part of a multi-year effort to develop a spatial inventory of septic tank systems. In addition, the coastal program also began working with partners to conduct operation and maintenance workshops.

In 2015, using Section 319 funding, the coastal program moved forward with the implementation of the Coastal Alabama Onsite Sewage Distribution System Inspection and Maintenance Program. The inspection and maintenance of residential sewage systems is being targeted annually in one of four rotating “sectors.” The coastal program is working with Alabama, Baldwin County, and Mobile County Public Health Departments, Baldwin and Mobile County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and participating state-certified pumpers to implement a voluntary program that encourages inspection and maintenance of systems. The program includes extensive public outreach and workshops that provide the public with information on proper maintenance of systems and a voucher for a free pump out of their septic system. At the time of the evaluation site visit, the coastal program had just completed the first year of the project. Over 300 people attended 14 public workshops, resulting in 252 residential septic system inspections and associated maintenance. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System provided public service announcement radio time to publicize these efforts through local iHeartMedia Inc. stations and social media on behalf of the soil and water conservation districts. Contractors and partners also advertised project workshops in their social media outlets and newsletters.

#### *City of Semmes*

The coastal program worked closely with the new City of Semmes (established May 2, 2011) as it developed and refined its municipal subdivision ordinances and municipal design and construction standards codes. The coastal program facilitated presentations for the Semmes Planning Commission, including localized presentation modules of the Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) and a presentation on coastal sustainability and green infrastructure. Through these planning sessions, the commission developed subdivision regulation ordinances that incorporated low-impact development practices and integrated subdivision development and stream buffer policies. The resulting ordinances and guidance include protections such as buffer widths of 150-feet for public drinking water supply and associated tributaries and wetlands; buffer widths of 100 feet for perennial streams and associated wetlands; and 75-foot buffer widths for natural drainage features and adjacent and associated wetlands.

These regulations have been included in the new *Alabama Low Impact Development (LID) Handbook* (2014) as model ordinances to emulate across Alabama. The coastal program provided funding and participated in the development of the handbook to encourage local communities to adopt low impact development techniques to improve stormwater management and water quality.

### *Stormwater Management Plan, Perdido Beach*

The coastal program provided matching funding through a Coastal Resources Improvement Program grant for a stormwater management plan for the Town of Perdido Beach. The community's stormwater system is outdated and inadequate, resulting in increased flooding, shoreline erosion, and polluted waterways. The city will hire a contractor to identify and map drainage problems and recommend short and long-term engineering and policy changes to make the city more resilient to coastal hazards.

### *Coastal Water Monitoring Program*

The Department of Environmental Management is using Section 319 funding to implement a Coastal Waters Monitoring Program to support Alabama's Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program and complement existing water monitoring efforts throughout the state. Since 2011, 20 new trend-monitoring stations were installed to provide data that can be used to assess water quality in coastal Alabama. The additional monitoring provides data necessary to categorize each water body's designated use classification and which are being used to develop indicators and assessment criteria to link chemical, physical, and biological conditions within estuaries and tributaries to conditions throughout associated watersheds. The baseline data and future monitoring will document changes and enable the state to measure the effectiveness of best management practices to reduce pollution. The water quality data are also being used in the development of coastal watershed assessments for ongoing watershed management planning efforts.

### ***Findings for Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program***

**Accomplishment:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program has worked to build capacity and partnerships to develop sustainable programs that may help address the remaining conditions on its Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program, for example, the development of the Coastal Alabama Onsite Sewage Distribution System Inspection and Maintenance Program. The coastal program has also supported local governments in their efforts to improve stormwater management through improved planning and regulations.

**Recommendation:** The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program to continue its work in supporting local government efforts to plan, improve regulations, and implement low-impact development techniques to address coastal nonpoint source pollution.

**Necessary Action:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program must work with the NOAA Office for Coastal Management to develop and submit a work plan with interim benchmarks and a timeline for meeting the outstanding conditions of its conditionally approved coastal nonpoint source pollution program by November 30, 2017. The documentation indicating how Alabama has met the outstanding conditions must be submitted no later than May 31, 2022.

### **Evaluation Metrics**

Beginning in 2012, state coastal management programs began tracking their success in

addressing three evaluation metrics specific to their programs. The evaluation metrics include a five-year target and provide a quantitative reference for each program about how well it is meeting the goals and objectives it has identified as important to the program.

**METRIC 1**

**Goal:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program partners, with state and federal agencies, will advance coastal resource management and engage local governments and citizens to reduce ecosystem impacts. This will be directed through the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program’s renewed Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.

**Objective:** By 2017, Alabama Coastal Area Management Program will have completed 25 activities that implement Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan strategies.

**Strategy:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program, established in 1979, works to improve interagency coordination to support local capacity to conserve coastal resources through active participation in ecosystem best management practices. The coastal program is a required and guiding member of several local coastal restoration programs, including the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program. The estuary program released a draft of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Assessment in February 2013 for public comment and with the coastal program and other partners is continuing to develop strategies for the final estuary program plan, which is expected to be finalized in 2014. The plan is focused on six areas: public access, beaches and shorelines, fish, heritage and culture, environmental health/resiliency, and water quality. The coastal program will support the implementation of the strategies in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. The coastal program will count the number of activities it completes to implement strategies. Activities are defined as (1) a new signed memoradums of understanding or memoradums of agreement with another organizations to facilitate implementation of a strategy and (2) providing technical assistance or financial assistance for a completed project that implements a strategy. The coastal program may count multiple activities as completed under one strategy, will begin to undertake activities in 2012 that it anticipates will further the implementation of strategies in the future estuary program plan, and will count these activities if they implement a strategy in the final plan.

**Performance Measure:** Activities completed that implement Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan strategies.

**Target:** Between 2012- 2017, 25 activities are completed that implement Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan strategies.

**First Year Results:** 1 activity completed

**Second Year Results:** 12 activities completed

**Third Year Results:** 6 activities completed

**Fourth Year Results:** 8 activities completed

**Cumulative Results:** 27 activities completed

**Discussion:** The coastal program, along with many other partners working in the Mobile Bay area, supported the development of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Management Plan 2013-2018. The coastal program is committed to helping address the priority actions identified in the plan to protect, restore, and conserve Alabama’s estuaries and coastal environments. The coastal program has already exceeded its five-year target for activities completed and will be continuing to work on additional activities in year five.

**METRIC 2**

**Goal:** To restore, create, or enhance public access in the Alabama coastal area.

**Objective 1:** Using the 2013 Strategic Plan and Request for Proposal process, five individual public access projects will be completed by 2017, one project per fiscal year.

**Strategy:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program will refer to the 2013 Strategic Plan to “maximize(s) resource benefits using sustainable methods.” The coastal program issues a yearly request for proposals and will address one access location per year based on public benefit, critical impacts, and funding availability. The coastal program will select and partner with an entity to restore, create, or enhance public access in the selected coastal area.

**Performance Measure:** Number of public access sites which are restored, created, or enhanced with technical or financial assistance from the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program.

**Target:** Between 2012 and 2017, five public access sites restored, created, or enhanced with technical or financial assistance from the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program.

**First Year Results:** 2 public access sites restored, created, or enhanced

**Second Year Results:** 2 sites public access sites restored, created, or enhanced

**Third Year Results:** 3 sites public access sites restored, created, or enhanced

**Fourth Year Results:** 3 sites public access sites restored, created, or enhanced

**Cumulative Results:** 10 sites public access sites restored, created, or enhanced

**Discussion:** The coastal program supports public access primarily by providing small grants to local communities to enhance existing public access sites. Projects completed in the past four years include an outdoor classroom, canoe and kayak launches, dune walkovers, and restroom. The coastal program manager also served as the public access team lead in the development of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Management Plan. The coastal program has already doubled its original target in four years and continues to provide funding to local governments to complete public access improvement projects.

**METRIC 3**

**Goal:** To support local governments by promoting one project in a community per year, thereby enhancing local capacity to reduce coastal impacts and increase resilience.

**Objective 2:** By 2017, five projects will be completed that support resilience in communities

where planning was outdated or did not exist.

**Strategy:** The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program issues a yearly request for proposals to conduct coastal planning. Project selection criteria will prioritize projects that are focused on the development of new plans or the updating of existing plans that address resilience: local comprehensive plans, local mitigation strategies, local post-disaster redevelopment plans, beach or floodplain management plans, local adaptation strategies, economic development strategies, or land development regulations. In addition, projects that focus on developing the plans for construction projects that reduce vulnerability to coastal risks may also be selected. By 2017, the coastal program will promote sustainable coastal resilience by reducing vulnerability in five communities.

**Performance Measure:** Number of locally implemented projects completed to enhance coastal resilience as a result of technical or financial assistance from the coastal management program.

**Target:** Between 2012 and 2017, five locally implemented projects will be completed to enhance coastal resilience as a result of technical or financial assistance from the coastal management program.

**First Year Results:** 0 locally implemented projects

**Second Year Results:** 0 locally implemented projects

**Third Year Results:** 2 locally implemented projects

**Fourth Year Results:** 2 locally implemented projects

**Cumulative Results:** 4 locally implemented projects

**Discussion:** The coastal program has provided financial and technical support to communities for planning efforts. Four cities have completed plans: City of Fairhope Beach Management Plan, City of Prichard Comprehensive Plan, City of Chickasaw Zoning Ordinance, and City of Bayou La Batre Comprehensive Plan. The coastal program should be able to meet or exceed its target in year five.



## Conclusion

For the reasons stated herein, I find that the State of Alabama is adhering to the programmatic requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act and its implementing regulations in the operation of its approved Alabama Coastal Area Management Program.

These evaluation findings contain one necessary action and three recommendations. The necessary action is mandatory and must be completed by the dates given. Recommendations must be considered before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation but are not mandatory at this time. Recommendations that must be repeated in subsequent evaluations may be elevated to necessary actions.

This is a programmatic evaluation of the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program, which may have implications regarding the state's financial assistance awards. However, it does not make any judgment about or replace any financial audits.

Signed: Dr. Jeffrey Payne  
Jeffrey L. Payne, Ph.D.  
Director, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

Dated: May 18, 2017  
Date

## **Appendix A: Response to Written Comments**

No comments received.