

Final Evaluation Findings

Michigan Coastal Management Program

May 2006 to June 2014

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Executive Summary

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office for Coastal Management 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 Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program (MCZMP) by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the designated lead agency, for the period from May 2006 to June 2014. The evaluation focused on three target areas: program administration, leadership for state initiatives, and program direction and vision.

The findings in this evaluation document will be considered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in making future financial award decisions concerning the coastal program. The evaluation came to these conclusions:

Accomplishment: The program was very effective at providing leadership at the state level on a number of statewide initiatives, and leadership in these areas is highly valued by federal, state, local, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. The areas of MCZMP leadership include improving beach safety through understanding and raising awareness of dangerous currents, incorporating climate change considerations into wetlands management, and enhancing public access through development of state water trails.

Accomplishment: The MCZMP implemented a number of improvements in program administration during the review period. These include improvements to grants management, running the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) program, and addressing the routine program change backlog.

The evaluation team also identified one necessary action and one recommendation:

Necessary Action: The MCZMP 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 goals and objectives it has identified as important to the coastal nonpoint source pollution program within six months of the release of the final 312 findings. The documentation indicating how Michigan met the outstanding conditions must be submitted no later than June 30, 2019.

Recommendation: The MCZMP should continue to seek creative ways to balance the support of regulatory functions with fostering stewardship activities and providing more technical assistance to coastal partners. The MCZMP is encouraged to develop a program strategy with clearly articulated goals and objectives to guide overall allocations and build in flexibility to address emerging issues.

This evaluation concludes that MDEQ is satisfactorily implementing and enforcing its federally approved coastal 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 CZMA.

Program Review Procedures

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) evaluated the Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program (MCZMP) in fiscal year 2014. The evaluation team consisted of Kenneth Walker, evaluation team lead; Josh Lott, acting northern regional director; Rachael Franks Taylor, site liaison; Susie Holst, evaluator; and Travis Olson, program coordinator, Wetland Protection and Habitat Restoration, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. The support of the MCZMP staff was crucial in conducting the evaluation and setting up interviews and the public meeting. The support and assistance of the MCZMP staff is most gratefully acknowledged.

NOAA sent a notification of the scheduled evaluation to Dan Wyant, director, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), on February 28, 2014, published a notice of "Intent to Evaluate" in the *Federal Register* on March 31, 2014, and notified members of Michigan's congressional delegation. The MCZMP posted a notice of the public meeting in the *Lansing State Journal* during the week of April 14, 2014.

The evaluation process included a review of relevant documents, a survey of stakeholders, the selection of three target areas, discussions with staff members about the target areas, and focus group discussions with stakeholders about the target areas. In addition, a public meeting was held on Wednesday, June 4, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. at Room M 119-Section 1, Lansing Community College-West Campus, 5708 Cornerstone Drive, Lansing, Michigan, 48917, to provide an opportunity for members of the public to express their opinions about the implementation of the MCZMP. Stakeholders and members of the public were given the opportunity to provide written comments via email or U.S. mail through June 6, 2014. The summarized comments and NOAA's responses are included in Appendix A. NOAA then developed draft evaluation findings, which were provided to MCZMP for review. The MCZMP's comments were considered in drafting the final evaluation findings.

Final evaluation findings for all coastal programs highlight the coastal 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 (CZMA) and of the state coastal program approved by NOAA. These must be carried out by the dates specified. Failure to address necessary actions may result in a future finding of non-adherence and the invoking of interim sanctions, as specified in CZMA §312(c).

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

Evaluation Findings

State Leadership

The MCZMP is providing leadership at the state level on a number of statewide initiatives, and leadership in these areas is highly valued by federal, state, local, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners. These initiatives are also providing highly transferable models applicable within the region and nationally. The areas of MCZMP leadership include improving beach safety through understanding and raising awareness of dangerous currents, incorporating climate change considerations into wetlands management, and enhancing public access through development of state water trails. The recent change of MCZMP staff members specializing within thematic areas of expertise, rather than by geographic region, has been an effective improvement and has fostered the ability to provide state-level leadership on these initiatives.

Dangerous Currents

The MCZMP is providing state-level leadership to improve public safety at Michigan's beaches by implementing research-based improvements in dangerous-current forecasting and hazard messaging. As a component of MCZMP's Section 309 assessment and five-year strategy for enhancing the program, this is a comprehensive strategy with a science-based approach to enhance forecasting and improve management of dangerous currents. This holistic strategy includes a regulatory change (a newly designated beach policy by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources), complemented by a stewardship, nonregulatory approach, which is highly transferable to other Great Lakes states.

Research-based improvements in dangerous current forecasting and hazard messaging have included 1) identification of the riskiest locations for rip currents; 2) development of improved techniques for predicting rip current conditions; and 3) development of effective ways for communicating the risks of rip currents to the public. The Great Lakes Research Center at Michigan Technological University (MTU) spearheaded research and data collection efforts. The data collection team used satellite imagery, as well as information collected by first responders, to identify areas with recurring dangerous currents. Education efforts have included workshops targeting park staff members, first responders, and community leaders at three different locations on the Lake Michigan coast. Improvements in signage and rescue equipment, establishment of safety buffer zones, and updated beach safety protocols are being implemented by partners, including Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) State Parks.

The evaluation team was impressed by the degree to which "dangerous currents" partners functioned as a "team," and this "team approach" has been critical to the success of this initiative. Expertise from project partners at MTU, MDNR, University of Michigan, and Michigan Sea Grant is being leveraged to increase scientific knowledge of dangerous currents to improve forecasting, and to develop more effective products and messages to educate beach managers

and the public. MCZMP staff skills (including GIS) are highly valued by the team. A technical steering committee is ensuring that the project partnership’s research findings inform policy updates.

In addition, project partners spoke highly of the proactive coordination role the MCZMP has played in this initiative. One project partner said, “the state stepped up with great leadership.” NOAA regional staff members pointed out that Michigan’s dangerous currents work is complementing the regional work of the NOAA Coastal Storms program. A NOAA regional staff member said that he is “deeply grateful for this group’s participation, and input to the NOAA Coastal Storms Program, and thanks the MCZMP for efforts in making sure regional investments of the Coastal Storms Program are well integrated and complementary.”

Beginning in 2012, Michigan began tracking a 312 evaluation metric related to the number of research projects completed that 1) identify the riskiest locations for rip current conditions; 2) improved techniques for predicting rip current conditions; or 3) develop effective ways to communicate the risks of rip currents to the public. After the first year, three research projects are underway to improve dangerous currents forecasting and messaging. The MCZMP is making good progress toward achieving the five-year target for completing these research projects. For additional information, see the “Evaluation Metrics” section.

The evaluation team found that the dangerous currents approach provides a model for bringing together partners, science, and outreach to improve management of important coastal zone management issues. This has resulted in more than changes to MDEQ/MDNR policy—it has impacted the way these issues are understood, messaged, and acted upon within the broader coastal management community.

Wetlands and Climate Change

MCZMP is providing state-level leadership to comprehensively improve wetlands management by incorporating measures to address climate change impacts. Michigan’s wetland program lacked a comprehensive tracking system for permitting, a method for integrating climate change concerns into permitting decisions, and climate change adaptation measures that could be implemented at the local level. As part of the MCZMP’s Section 309 assessment and enhancement strategy, the goal of this initiative is to improve the resilience of coastal wetlands to the impacts of climate change through new guidelines and procedures for wetlands permitting and mitigation, coupled with enhanced community capacity to manage wetlands. The MCZMP is working closely with project partners, including the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) and the Land Information Access Association (LIAA).

Accomplishments to date include convening a 2011 symposium that brought together wetland and climate change experts. The symposium led to the report, *Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Coastal and Inland Wetlands in the State of Michigan*. The symposium and the report provided a framework for a comprehensive approach to managing wetlands in the face on climate change impacts.

An important component of this work is provision of technical assistance to enhance community capacity to address wetland and climate impacts through local planning and zoning. Michigan does not have comprehensive statewide land-use planning requirements, so the MCZMP has long played a role in enhancing planning capacity in coastal communities. Community self-assessments on resilience are planned as part of this assistance, and will assist local decision makers by informing them on community risk and vulnerabilities. In addition, training for local decision makers on understanding resource protection and resilience in the context of land use regulations is also planned.

Beginning in 2012, Michigan began tracking a 312 evaluation metric related to the number of coastal communities conducting vulnerability assessments for improving the resilience of coastal wetlands to climate change impacts. While the MCZMP has not made progress toward achieving the five-year target for this measure, vulnerability assessments are planned for the upcoming years. For additional information, see the “Evaluation Metrics” section.

According to partners, bringing together Michigan communities (including Monroe, Ludington, St. Joseph, and Grand Haven) around this issue has built new partnerships and leveraged funding to support these efforts. The City of Monroe completed *Resilient Monroe*, a cooperative land use planning and community design effort that will increase the community’s ability to adapt to various kinds of change.

As a complement to the community-level planning, MCZMP is also working with GLC and other partners to compile best practices for integrating climate considerations into wetland management.

In addition, partners are working with the Michigan Townships Association and Michigan Association of Planning to provide curriculum for education on wetlands resilience to climate change. Despite a lack of literature and model best practices to draw on, the partnership has continued to make progress and provide leadership on this key component of the wetlands strategy. A September 24, 2014, nationally advertised webinar showcased best practices identified through this work and highlighted the transferability of this work.

At the end of this multi-faceted strategy, Michigan’s wetland agency will have procedures that touch upon every element of the review process that consider climate change adaptation. Examples include having information available to GIS staff members, permit conditions that address climate change, better site selection for mitigation, watershed approaches for mitigation, links to invasive species data, and enhanced capacity at the local level to address these concerns. The MCZMP is both influencing state policy on permitting and mitigating wetlands and building local community capacity to address the issue.

The evaluation team noted that the wetlands initiative aligns well with the stewardship mission of the MCZMP, and the program’s provision of technical assistance to enhance community capacity to address locally relevant coastal issues. This leadership role is highly valued by

partners, including GLC, LIAA, and local governments. Partners appreciate the leadership, despite challenges that include implementing changes in state regulations and working with local governments to meet local barriers to implementation, such as a lack of available best practices. This comprehensive approach to incorporating climate concerns into wetlands management is a highly transferable model for both the region and other coastal states outside the Great Lakes.

Water Trails and Public Access

Since 2005, the MCZMP has provided grants supporting the development of water trails along the Great Lakes. These projects comprehensively plan for local, regional, or statewide coastal trails along Michigan's shoreline, and they enhance coastal access, encourage stewardship of coastal, cultural and historic resources, increase accessibility for all users, and support local and regional waterfront revitalization. The state has funded water trail projects, assisted communities with marketing, and developed a statewide data base or "one stop shop" for water trails."

The Land Information Access Association, in partnership with Michigan Sea Grant and the MCZMP, developed a comprehensive website (www.michiganwatertrails.org) that provides a statewide repository with information on Michigan water trails. This site has served to build awareness of Michigan water trails, increase sharing of resources among coastal regions, and increase visibility and marketing of water trails to a broader audience. Western Michigan University is receiving funding to implement, monitor, and evaluate a national recreation water trail on Lake Michigan. The MCZMP has also used targeted requests for proposals (RFPs) to support partner projects, including approximately \$342,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2012 for water trails. The scope of work included inventorying Lake Michigan kayak access points, determining long-term viability of launches in view of future climate change and changing lake levels, hosting the Lake Michigan Water Trails Conference (fall 2012), and meeting with local agencies, visitor information centers, and the public.

The evaluation team learned that this partnership has effectively leveraged expertise and coordinated efforts across state agencies to support the development of local and regional water trails, in many cases where local capacity alone may not have been sufficient to complete the projects. While state leadership has been valuable, local challenges remain, including coordination with statewide (land-side) trail planning and coordination and technical assistance for infrastructure investments (boat launch, camping, rest rooms).

With the growing interest in regional and national water trails, Michigan is providing a model for both the region and the nation. Through targeting the FY12 RFP, the MCZMP is addressing current and emerging statewide priorities. In the evaluation survey, the support of the water trails initiative and public access efforts was cited as a top accomplishment by two-thirds of the respondents. This represents an excellent example of how the MCZMP is adapting to address emerging issues and priorities by realigning existing resources.

Accomplishment: The program was very effective at providing leadership at the state level on a number of statewide initiatives, and leadership in these areas is highly valued by federal, state, local, and NGO partners. These initiatives are also providing highly transferable models applicable within the region and nationally. The areas of MCZMP leadership include improving scientific understanding and community awareness of dangerous currents, incorporating climate change impacts into wetlands management, and enhancing public access through development of state water trails.

Program Administration

The MCZMP implemented a number of improvements in program administration during the review period, enhancing grants management, competitions for Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) funds, and progress in addressing the routine program change backlog for revised enforceable policies. Improvements to the grants management process were also confirmed in the results of the evaluation survey sent to MCZMP partners. Grants administration was cited as one of the MCZMP's top strengths and one of the top accomplishments during the review period.

First, significant improvements to the grants management process, including setting minimum and maximum thresholds for FY13, have resulted in a lower number of generally larger projects and a revised timeline. This has allowed the MCZMP to focus staff resources on a smaller number of key projects, which has resulted in more in-depth assistance and enhanced staff expertise. The MCZMP staff specializations and more streamlined funding have allowed the MCZMP to provide more targeted technical assistance to partners to support local projects. Topical organization has led to a more credible comparison of the merits of pass-through grant applications. In addition, the program introduced a grants manual and a webinar during the review period and made efforts to standardize the annual application review process.

Additional improvements to grants management included realigning federal awards for regulatory activities within a 12-month fiscal year, which allowed the MCZMP to redirect approximately \$300,000 in federal funds for water trails planning, a statewide priority. In addition, beginning with the FY13 award, the MCZMP intends to complete tasks within a two-year time frame, rather than extending grants to the maximum three-year period.

The evaluation team noted that these efforts are all incrementally improving the management of grants, while redirected funds are supporting a priority for the state and many coastal communities (water trails planning). Although achieving this task outside the 312 review period, the MCZMP took steps to release its state FY15 request for proposals earlier than in past years so that grant project recommendations would be included in the FY14 cooperative agreement submission and therefore be ready to start immediately once the award period began. As a result of these efforts, the program is better positioned to be responsive to partner needs and current priorities.

The MCZMP provides technical assistance to partners as part of its stewardship mission, above and beyond the traditional regulatory technical assistance for permit applications. The evaluation discovered that staff participation in technical assistance efforts, broadly defined and not limited to guidance on permit applications, is highly valued by partners. “Staff” was also cited as a top program strength in the survey (7 of 9 respondents), and the ability of MCZMP staff members to travel within the state to participate in local projects and statewide initiatives is highly valued by partners. The MCZMP should take advantage of local, state, and national training opportunities and conferences to help staff members keep current.

The MCZMP has run several successful CELCP competitions and recommended multiple projects for funding from NOAA; two such projects have been successfully completed, with the MCZMP effectively administering nearly \$5 million in federal matching funds. During the review period, the MCZMP also submitted its draft CELCP plan to NOAA and received comments back; although revising the CELCP plan has not been a recent staff focus, the MCZMP and NOAA agreed to revisit the status of the plan and possible steps for moving to finalize it.

The MCZMP has established a process and schedule for addressing the routine program change backlog and has already submitted and received concurrence from NOAA on two of these changes this calendar year.

Accomplishment: The MCZMP implemented a number of improvements in program administration during the review period. These included improvements to grants management, running the CELCP program, and addressing the routine program change backlog.

Program Direction and Vision

The evaluation team noted the challenges for a networked program in balancing stewardship and regulatory functions so that both have adequate resources and are linked well together. As noted by the program manager, “it is challenging to find the most effective balance between funding support for enforceable policies and the desire to provide substantial technical and financial assistance to stakeholders.” This is particularly challenging because much of Michigan’s shoreline falls outside of regulatory reach; for example, less than 10 percent of Michigan’s shoreline is designated high-risk erosion areas, yet erosion remains an important management issue outside of those areas.

The evaluation team was impressed with the level of technical assistance provided in concert with permit applications (regulatory activities), as well as on specific projects and initiatives (nonregulatory activities). The evaluation team heard repeatedly that this technical assistance on stewardship activities (including building local capacity for protecting coastal resources) is highly valued by partners within the state, and this was also reflected in the survey results. Partnerships were also cited as a top strength of the program (6 of 9 of respondents).

The MCZMP is well positioned to provide training, education on issues, and technical assistance to enhance coastal community capacity to address emerging issues and priorities. The

evaluation team believes this is a significant opportunity for the MCZMP to be proactive and forward thinking, to be strategic about future investments, and to link to long-term program outcomes.

Recommendation: The MCZMP should continue to seek creative ways to balance the support of regulatory functions with fostering stewardship activities and providing more technical assistance to coastal partners. The MCZMP is encouraged to develop a program strategy with clearly articulated goals and objectives to guide overall allocations and build in flexibility to address emerging issues.

Michigan Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program

In accordance with Section 6217 of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990 (CZARA), all states with federally approved coastal management programs must develop comprehensive coastal nonpoint pollution control programs (coastal nonpoint programs). These programs must be developed and implemented in accordance with guidance by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Under CZARA, if NOAA and EPA 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 CZMA and Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Ensuring that all states fully satisfy their coastal nonpoint program requirements under CZARA and the CZMA to maintain full funding of their coastal management programs is important. Having an approved coastal nonpoint program is an identified requirement for state coastal management programs. The CZMA states that coastal management programs shall “[contain] enforceable policies and mechanisms to implement the applicable requirements of the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program of the State required by section 1455b of this title,” Section 306(d)(3)(16). Since the Section 312 evaluation process is designed to assess how well the state is carrying out the goals and objectives of the CZMA, 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 Michigan initially submitted program documentation in June 1995. After carefully reviewing Michigan’s coastal nonpoint program submission to evaluate the extent to which Michigan’s program conforms with the requirements of CZARA, NOAA and EPA approved Michigan’s program, with conditions, on September 24, 1997. The conditions outlined actions the state needed to take to fully satisfy all CZARA requirements and receive full approval of its coastal nonpoint program. Since then, NOAA and EPA have worked with Michigan to address its remaining conditions. Although there was a lull in activity for several years, work among federal and state partners to address the remaining conditions has been reinvigorated recently. NOAA and EPA provided Michigan with an updated status table of its remaining conditions in May 2014 and amended the table in August 2014 to ensure the table reflected NOAA and EPA interim decisions (still subject to public review) on the conditions.

The evaluation team recognizes Michigan's good faith effort to move forward with full approval of its conditionally approved coastal nonpoint program. The Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program is working closely with partners, including the Michigan Nonpoint Source Program operated under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, NOAA, and EPA, to adequately address the remaining coastal nonpoint program conditions.

Necessary Action: The MCZMP 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 goals and objectives it has identified as important to the coastal nonpoint source pollution program within six months of the release of the final 312 findings. The documentation indicating how Michigan met the outstanding conditions must be submitted no later than June 30, 2019.

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 Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program will promote the wise management of Great Lakes water and coastal resources by fostering the development of vibrant and resilient coastal communities through the protection and restoration of our sensitive and biologically diverse coastal ecosystems.

Objective 1: Improve public safety at Michigan's beaches.

Strategy: Improved Rip Current Forecasting and Hazard Messaging

One of the objectives of this strategy is to reduce the potential for rip current-related deaths by improving rip current forecasting and hazard messaging through research.

Performance Measure 1: The number of research projects completed that 1) identify the riskiest locations for rip currents; 2) improve techniques for predicting rip current conditions; or 3) develop effective ways for communicating the risks of rip currents to the public.

Target 1: By 2017, complete three research projects that 1) identify the riskiest locations for rip current conditions; 2) improve techniques for predicting rip current conditions; or 3) develop effective ways to communicate the risks of rip currents to the public.

First Year Results: 0

After the first year, three of the target research projects are underway to improve dangerous-currents forecasting and hazard messaging. Although first-year results are zero (no research

projects were completed within the first year), the MCZMP is making good progress toward achieving the five-year target for completing these research projects.

METRIC 2

Goal: The Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program will promote the wise management of Great Lakes water and coastal resources by fostering the development of vibrant and resilient coastal communities through the protection and restoration of our sensitive and biologically diverse coastal ecosystems.

Objective 2: Coastal communities make decisions on the siting of wind facilities that properly balance coastal growth and development with protection of coastal natural resources.

Strategy: Offshore Wind Energy Regulatory Program Development

A major gap for providing guidance on classifying offshore areas as favorable, conditional, and categorically excluded is the lack of current data sets. The collection and analysis of research-based GIS data on nearshore fisheries habitat, and use of coastal and offshore areas by bats, migratory birds, and other protected species is a priority.

Performance Measure 2: The number of research projects and surveys conducted on migratory birds and bats, nearshore fisheries habitat, and state and federally protected species related to informed decision-making on the siting of wind facilities.

Target 2: By 2017, complete five research projects and surveys of migratory birds and bats, nearshore fisheries habitat, and state and federally protected species related to informed decision-making on the siting of wind facilities.

First Year Results: 4 research projects

After the first year, the MCZMP has achieved 80 percent of its five-year target, providing coastal communities with information needed to minimize the impact of new wind energy facilities on coastal natural resources. (Four of the five target research projects were completed by the end of the evaluation period.) The completed projects addressed the statewide identification of migration corridors and “hotspots” of Neotropical migrant songbirds in flight, use of islands and offshore waters of northern Lake Michigan by migrating birds and bats, distribution of waterfowl and water birds in the offshore waters of northern Lake Huron, and location of rare natural plant communities of the west and northeast coasts of the Lower Peninsula. The MCZMP is making good progress toward achieving the five-year target for completing the five research projects.

METRIC 3

Goal: The Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program will promote the wise management of Great Lakes water and coastal resources by fostering the development of vibrant and resilient

coastal communities through the protection and restoration of our sensitive and biologically diverse coastal ecosystems.

Objective 3: Improve the resilience of coastal wetlands to the impacts associated with climate change.

Strategy: Climate Change Adaptation in Coastal Wetland Management

One of the objectives of this strategy is to build the capacity of local planning and zoning to address climate change impacts on coastal wetlands. Such Michigan-specific technical assistance does not currently exist.

Performance Measure 3: The number of coastal communities conducting vulnerability assessments for improving the resilience of coastal wetlands to climate change impacts.

Target 3: By 2017, three coastal communities conduct vulnerability assessments for improving the resilience of coastal wetlands to the impacts of climate change.

First Year Results: 0

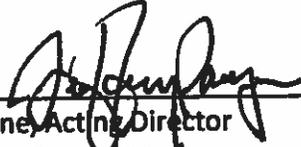
The MCZMP has not made progress toward achieving the five-year target for this measure. No vulnerability assessments were underway during the evaluation period.

Conclusion

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

These evaluation findings contain one necessary action and one recommendation that must be considered before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation. Recommendations that must be repeated in subsequent evaluations may be elevated to necessary actions.

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



Jeff Payne, Acting Director
Office for Coastal Management

Nov 24, 2014
Date

Appendix A: OCM'S Response to Written Comments

Brian Klatt, Director
Michigan Natural Features Inventory
Michigan State University Extension
Lansing, Michigan

Comment: Mr. Klatt wrote to express that, as a grant recipient, his interactions with the MCZMP have been very positive over the review period. According to Mr. Klatt, the MCZMP staff members have been cooperative and professional in resolving issues (such as different fiscal years between NOAA and MSU). In addition, Mr. Klatt has “found that priorities of the MCZMP, as reflected in their strategic plan and annual RFPs, are well in line with the pressing issues of the times, such as climate change, alternative energy development and coastal community planning concerns that go along with these issues. Thus, the focus of the MCZMP in the past five years has, in my opinion, been entirely appropriate.”

In addition, Mr. Klatt expresses his concern about NOAA’s “Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements.” The Michigan Natural Features Inventory includes sensitive information on endangered species, which may affect real estate values and encourage poaching.

NOAA Response: NOAA agrees that the MCZMP has made improvements to the management of grants over the review period. In addition, through its strategic plan and the annual RFP, the MCZMP continues to focus on current coastal management priorities for the state.

In terms of NOAA’s data sharing policy, “sharing data refers to making data visible, accessible, and independently understandable to users in a timely manner at minimal cost to users, *except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.*” The location of endangered species falls under these exemptions. In the future, include this justification in your data sharing plan so all parties are aware of this issue before the project is funded.

NOAA thanks Mr. Klatt for participating during the public meeting and providing written comments on the MCZMP and NOAA’s data sharing policy.

Richard Micka
Monroe, Michigan

Comment: Mr. Micka submitted comments on behalf of the Lake Erie Clean Up Committee. Mr. Micka cited the 2013 study of Michigan coastal communities by the Office of the Great Lakes and Michigan Sea Grant. Mr. Micka suggests that Monroe, Michigan, should rank high on this list because of the ongoing long-term recovery process (Area of Concern under Great Lakes

Water Quality Agreement). Mr. Micka summarizes the need for wildlife habitat restoration and stabilization on Raisin Point and LaPlaisance Bay, Lake Erie.

NOAA Response: While a portion of Michigan’s Coastal Zone Management Act funding is passed through to the local level, those decisions are made at the state level with regard to annual priorities articulated in the request for proposals. For example, water trails were a priority with 2013 funding, and Monroe County received \$11,000 to plan, map, and market a water trail along the county’s Lake Erie coast, including the River Raisin. NOAA thanks Mr. Micka for submitting written comments.