

Final Evaluation Findings

South Carolina Coastal Management Program

April 2008 to June 2019

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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 South Carolina Coastal Management Program administered by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the designated lead agency, for the period from April 2008 to June 2019. The evaluation focused on two target areas: beachfront management and coastal hazards.

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

Findings for Program Administration

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program was one of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's first pilot programs for a new ePermitting platform. Staff worked closely with program developers to ensure that the new system provided an improved interface and transparency for applicants and allowed for documentation of workflow processes and improved digital records management.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program and Department of Health and Environmental Control to strengthen the staff capacity of the Coastal Services Section and build on its long-term leadership and expertise in convening experts and stakeholders to address challenging coastal management issues and in providing tools and technical assistance to local governments and stakeholders.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to review legislative and regulatory changes related to its program and submit any changes to enforceable policies for incorporation into its federally approved coastal program.

Findings for Beachfront Management

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program has done an excellent job convening working groups and stakeholders to address challenging coastal management issues. The program's skill in convening and facilitating science-to-management applications includes the Shoreline Change Advisory Committee, Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management, and Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines Stakeholder Workgroup.

Recommendation: The South Carolina Coastal Program is encouraged to capitalize on its expertise in convening experts and stakeholders to initiate a coastwide dialogue concerning implementation of the state's policy of preservation of beaches in the face of rising sea levels,

including looking statewide at the vulnerability of the coast, renourishment needs, sand sources, and costs.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to reinvigorate its efforts to integrate the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System criteria into guidance for local comprehensive beach management plans. In addition, the coastal program is encouraged to develop a voluntary template for a marsh management plan to serve as a guide for interested communities and to work with communities to encourage and support incorporation of beach management plans and new marsh management plans into local comprehensive plans and local hazard mitigation plans.

Findings for Coastal Hazards

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program has a culture of learning and improvement and actively seeks feedback after hazard events to improve the state’s hazard preparedness and response. This has that resulted in communities being able to recover more quickly from storm impacts through improved interagency coordination and increased efficiency in evaluating damage to sites and issuance of emergency permits for structure repair.

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program has used technology to provide citizens and local governments with the information and tools they need to make informed decisions and has engaged them in coastal management through the MyCoast application, Coastal Hazards Vulnerability Assessment Tool, and Beach Erosion Research and Monitoring (BERM) Explorer.

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program partnership with the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve on the reserve system’s Science Collaborative project, “Evaluating Living Shorelines to Inform Regulatory Decision-Making in South Carolina,” has yielded science-based information and tools that are informing the coastal program’s development of policies and guidance for living shorelines.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to continue to strengthen its ability to communicate and reach diverse audiences, including partners, members of the public, marine contractors, and elected officials and their staffs.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to identify strategies to address abandoned vessels and to provide guidance and assistance to local governments.

This evaluation concludes that the South Carolina Coastal 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 South Carolina Coastal Management Program in fiscal year 2019. The evaluation team consisted of Carrie Hall, evaluation team lead; Adam Stein, coastal hazards specialist; Lindy Betzhold, site liaison; Heidi Stiller, southern regional director; and David J.L. Blatt, supervising environmental analyst, Connecticut Coastal Management Program. The support of South Carolina Coastal Management Program staff members was crucial in conducting the evaluation, and this support is most gratefully acknowledged.

NOAA sent a notification of the scheduled evaluation to the director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, published a notice of “Intent to Evaluate” in the *Federal Register* on April 30, 2019, and notified members of South Carolina’s congressional delegation. The coastal management program posted a notice of the public meeting and opportunity to comment in the *Post and Courier* on April 13, 2019.

The evaluation process included a review of relevant documents and a survey of stakeholders, which helped identify two target areas for the evaluation: beachfront management and coastal hazards. 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, June 5, at 5:30 p.m. at North Charleston City Hall, City Council Chambers, 2500 City Hall Lane, North Charleston, South Carolina, 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. A summary of the written comments received and the NOAA Office for Coastal Management’s responses are included in Appendix A. NOAA then developed draft evaluation findings, which were provided to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control for review, and the department’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 the Coastal Zone Management Act or its implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R., Part 923, and of the state coastal management program approved by NOAA, and the terms of any grant or cooperative agreement funded under the Coastal Zone Management Act. Necessary actions 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

Administration and Staffing

The South Carolina Coastal Management Program is implemented through the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management within the Department of Health and Environmental Control. In 2012, the department was restructured. A new Environmental Affairs Division was created, containing the department's environmental programs, including the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. The Bureau of Water formally separated the State Coastal Zone Consistency Certification process from the Coastal Stormwater Permitting program. The coastal program subsequently formed a Coastal Zone Consistency Section within its Regulatory Division to handle state and federal consistency determinations. This organizational change was the result of an internal analysis and recommendation to leverage staff expertise and improve the efficiency and timeliness of project reviews. The department's administrative and financial functions were also consolidated into one unit. The consolidation of administrative and financial functions resulted from a reduction in force intended to better utilize administrative resources and reduce duplicative positions.

In February 2017, the Coastal Zone Consistency Section assumed all responsibilities for wetlands and activities in waters of the U.S. and the State of South Carolina outside of the Critical areas of the coastal zone. One senior critical area staff member with technical and policy knowledge of freshwater wetlands transitioned to the section, and one additional full-time position was added to give the section capacity to handle the increased volume of projects for review.

Coastal program staff members are well respected by their partners and stakeholders and are described as "dedicated," "knowledgeable," "responsive to feedback," and "willing to evolve." During the evaluation period, the coastal program lost significant institutional knowledge through staff attrition and retirement. To help address this issue, the coastal program has identified and preserved documents of historical significance through a concerted digital file conversion effort, as well as outsourcing the scanning and geo-rectification of historical aerial images of the South Carolina coast. The coastal program has also focused on building the technical capacity and expertise of staff members, from the use of survey grade GPS equipment in field assessments to the incorporation of GIS analysis in project evaluations. The additional technical expertise has enabled the coastal program to be able to provide the public and local communities with tools and information to inform their decision-making.

The coastal program is valued by stakeholders and partners for its leadership role in convening experts and stakeholders to address challenging coastal management issues. Stakeholders are appreciative of the time and expertise the coastal program staff brings to this role and are looking to the coastal program for leadership on a number of coastal issues, such as aquaculture, coastal hazards, and living shorelines. The Coastal Services Section's loss of staff

has impacted the coastal program's capacity to address coastal hazards and beachfront management and provide convening and technical assistance to local governments. The coastal program could strengthen its Coastal Services Section and grow the program's valued capabilities of convening and facilitating stakeholders to address emerging and challenging coastal management issues and provide technical assistance for tools to local governments and stakeholders. Potential opportunities to capitalize on the coastal program's convening capabilities are further described in the findings below and also include

- Supporting the initiation of additional resilience networks for coastal communities,
- Reconvening the Aquaculture Working Group to address aquaculture issues,
- Bringing stakeholders together to identify vulnerable marshes that could benefit from restoration activities as opportunities become available,
- Exploring opportunities to improve the state's ability to use more detailed coastal data collected by local governments,
- Exploring the costs and benefits of the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for enforcement, and
- Taking a leadership role in engaging and bringing NOAA-supported partner programs together to better capitalize on each other's strengths and address coastal management issues.

Permitting

In May 2017, the Critical Area Permitting program was one of the first pilot programs to convert to the department's new ePermitting platform. Coastal program staff members worked closely with project developers for several months to ensure that the system met their needs. Although the transition caused initial permitting delays, the ePermitting system now allows for documentation of workflow processes and improved digital records management, communication with applicants, and transparency. State Coastal Zone Consistency transitioned stormwater permitting to the new ePermitting system in October 2017, and other department program areas will continue to be migrated.

In May 2015, Act No. 12 of the 2015-2016 legislative session amended Section 48-39-170(C) of the South Carolina Code of Laws to provide a three-year statute of limitations on enforcement violations of the Coastal Tidelands and Wetlands Act related to minor development activities. Act 12 also provides for exceptions in the instance where the alleged violator knowingly or intentionally withholds information related to the alleged violation, or for acts of concealment by the alleged violator including failure to make application for, and subsequently receive, required permit authorizations. Minor development activities are defined in both the statute and the regulation as "the construction, maintenance, repair or alteration of any private pier[s] or erosion control structure, the construction of which does not involve dredge activities. (S.C. Code Ann. §48-39-10(N); S.C. Code Ann. R.30-1(D)(34)). In an effort to address timeframes established as a result of this statute change, the coastal program is encouraged to explore new methods, such as overflights, and opportunities to efficiently ensure that structures are built as permitted.

Federal Consistency

The previous evaluation findings (2008) contained a necessary action that the coastal program submit all changes to enforceable policies that were not incorporated into the coastal program, including at a minimum the marsh island access regulations, to NOAA through the program change process. The necessary action also stipulated that if the coastal program identified a new role for the appellate panel, the program should work with NOAA to determine if the change should be incorporated into the coastal management program, and that change should be submitted by 2011. The coastal program emailed a draft routine program change request to NOAA for review on November 30, 2009 (SC-2009-a). The record for this draft submission is unclear as to why the draft was not formally submitted; however, at that time, NOAA determined the necessary action to have been completed. In 2018, The Coastal Zone Management Appellate Panel was repealed by the South Carolina General Assembly by Act No. 167.

The coastal program has not provided program updates for incorporation into its federally approved program since 2000. Changes to the enforceable policies of the program that have occurred since that time cannot be used for Coastal Zone Management Act federal consistency review purposes. The coastal program is encouraged to review legislative and regulatory changes related to its program and submit any changes to enforceable policies for incorporation into its federally approved coastal program. The coastal program is also encouraged to develop a regular schedule annually, or biennially, for reviewing legislative and regulatory changes and submitting them to NOAA.

Coastal Zone Boundary

In response to a request from the South Carolina General Assembly, the coastal program completed the report *Preliminary Analysis of the South Carolina Coastal Zone Boundary* (2016) (http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/Docs/DHEC_CZBoundary_Study.pdf), which details how the current boundary was established, the program's regulatory authorities within the coastal zone, and a preliminary science-based analysis of potential alternative geographic areas that could comprise the South Carolina Coastal Zone.

Public Access

The coastal program created the South Carolina Beach Access and Water Quality Guide (<https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/beachaccess/>), a web- and mobile-compliant application that allows users to find information on over 600 public beach access sites and their amenities. The staff mapped existing beach access locations and worked with coastal municipalities to ensure the accuracy of information. To further enhance the application, staff worked with the Bureau of Water to incorporate nearshore water-quality monitoring data. The beach access guide is a great resource for the public and tourists who want to find beach access sites with the facilities they desire.

Findings for Program Administration

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program was one of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control’s first pilot programs for a new ePermitting platform. Staff worked closely with program developers to ensure that the new system provided an improved interface and transparency for applicants and allowed for documentation of workflow processes and improved digital records management.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program and Department of Health and Environmental Control to strengthen the staff capacity of the Coastal Services Section and build on its long-term leadership and expertise in convening experts and stakeholders to address challenging coastal management issues and in providing tools and technical assistance to local governments and stakeholders.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to review legislative and regulatory changes related to its program and submit any changes to enforceable policies for incorporation into its federally approved coastal program.

Beachfront Management

Shoreline Change Initiative

In 2007, the department’s Shoreline Change Initiative brought experts together to organize existing data collection and research efforts, identify additional research needs, and formulate policy options to guide the management of South Carolina’s estuarine and beachfront shorelines. An external advisory panel made up of 23 scientists, agency researchers, municipal officials, and various stakeholders worked to identify potential research and policy needs related to beachfront and estuarine shoreline management for the coming decades. The committee’s report “Adapting to Shoreline Change a Foundation for Improved Management and Planning in South Carolina” (2010) contains 13 general recommendations, and numerous sub-recommendations for consideration by public officials and decision-makers.

Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management

In 2010, the department brought together stakeholders representing a broad range of interests to form the Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management. The committee was charged with developing specific statutory and regulatory recommendations to help guide the stewardship of South Carolina’s beachfront and estuarine shorelines. The “Blue Ribbon Committee Shoreline Management Final Report” was published in 2013. Following the final report, a regulation package was submitted by the department for consideration by the South Carolina General Assembly. In 2016, the South Carolina General Assembly amended the statutes with the passage of Act 197, along with a package of new regulations. Together, these actions amended definitions, provided clarity and specific standards to be utilized in the evaluation of beachfront permit applications and notifications, and provided specific standards, conditions, and administrative procedures for issuance of emergency orders within the state’s

beachfront jurisdiction. The act was amended to prohibit the beachfront jurisdictional baseline from moving seaward from the established position after December 31, 2017, and eliminated the right to petition to move the baseline seaward after completion of a renourishment project. The amendments enable department staff to administer the coastal program more effectively.

Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines and Beach Preservation

The coastal program is required by law to establish and periodically review the position of the two lines of beachfront jurisdiction, the baseline and the setback line, once every seven to ten years. For all oceanfront land that is developed or potentially could be developed, the average annual shoreline change rate, also known as the average long-term erosion rate, is also reviewed during this time frame.

The baseline is the more seaward of the two jurisdictional lines. Seaward of the baseline, permitted activities are limited to wooden walkways, small wooden decks, fishing piers, golf courses, normal landscaping, groins, activities authorized by emergency orders, beach renourishment projects, and structures authorized by a special permit. The setback line is the landward line of beachfront jurisdiction. Between the baseline and setback line, the coastal program exercises regulatory permitting authority for such activities as habitable structures and associated infrastructure, decks, gazebos, other public access structures, and sand dune management. Seaward of the setback line, construction of new shore-parallel erosion control structures (e.g., seawalls, revetments, or bulkheads) is prohibited. However, existing erosion control structures may be maintained or repaired with prior authorization.

The South Carolina General Assembly's passage of Act 197 in 2016, established a December 31, 2017 deadline which prohibited the seaward movement of the jurisdictional baseline after this date. Typically, the beachfront jurisdictional line revisions are completed over a two to three-year time frame; however, this timeframe was compressed in order to complete the proposed line revisions by December 31, 2017. From July 2016 through September 2017, coastal program staff conducted field data collection and performed data processing and analysis. Preliminary revised beachfront jurisdictional line locations were released by the coastal program in October 2017. Public notice of these proposed lines was extended past December 31, 2017 which resulted in a delayed adoption of revised beachfront jurisdictional lines.

In May 2018, Act 173, the Beachfront Management Reform Act, was signed by the governor. The act established the jurisdictional lines in effect for landowners as the most seaward of the baseline and setback line established during the 2008 through 2012 establishment cycle, or as proposed by the department on October 6, 2017. The act contained an exception for those parties that had timely challenged the department's decision to extend the public notice and delay adoption of the jurisdictional lines. The act also required the department to promulgate regulations to implement provisions of the act, including regulations that the department will use to locate a primary oceanfront sand dune.

To initiate input into the regulatory development process, the coastal program convened a Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines Stakeholder Workgroup between October 2018 and February

2019. The workgroup was tasked with providing recommendations to the department to clarify the definition of a primary oceanfront sand dune and develop strategies to qualify and measure “extraordinary erosion” as referenced in S.C. Code of Laws § 48-39-280(E)(4).

The workgroup examined an extensive amount of background information and available data to assist with member participation and discussion. A summary of this information and the details of the workgroup’s discussions are documented in the May 2019 “Beachfront Jurisdictional Line Stakeholder Workgroup Final Report” (<https://bit.ly/2SZG42K>). The workgroup developed five recommendations as a result of the discussions. After the evaluation period, the department submitted proposed regulatory changes to R.30-1 and R.30-14, Coastal Division Regulations, to address recommendations one and four.

The Beachfront Management Reform Act also changed the state policy from one of retreat to one of beach preservation, S.C. Code of Laws § 48-39-280(A). During the evaluation site visit, many partners and stakeholders discussed the need for a coastwide conversation about planning for sea-level rise under the new state policy of beach preservation, including the need to look coastwide at vulnerability, renourishment needs, sand sources, and costs. The coastal program is encouraged to capitalize on its expertise in convening experts and stakeholders to initiate a coastwide dialogue concerning implementation of the state’s policy of preservation of beaches in the face of rising sea levels, including looking statewide at the vulnerability of the coast, renourishment needs, sand sources, and costs.

Planning

Through the local comprehensive beach management plan process, the coastal program works with 18 coastal counties and municipalities to develop and update plans that address a range of beachfront management issues, including the mitigation of coastal erosion and flood hazards that impact public infrastructure and private property. The South Carolina Beachfront Management Act establishes a requirement that ocean beachfront counties and municipalities prepare local comprehensive beach management plans that address a minimum of 10 specific elements. Once adopted by the community, local comprehensive beach management plans are submitted to the department for review and state approval. Local comprehensive beach management plans are required to be reviewed by the local government every five years. Additionally, updated revisions are required to be submitted for state approval every 10 years.

In recent years, coastal communities have expressed a significant interest in the National Flood Insurance Program’s Community Rating System (CRS). The CRS Program is a voluntary program that rewards communities that take a proactive approach to flood mitigation beyond minimum standards. The coastal program’s “Section 309 Assessments and Strategies” hazards strategy calls for the program to assist local communities with integrating the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s CRS-based principles into local comprehensive beach management plans. The strategy includes the creation and support of the Coastal South Carolina CRS Users Group to serve as a valuable forum for coastal communities to share lessons learned, identify best practices, and gain efficiencies in planning processes that result in hazard mitigation and realized cost savings. In addition, the coastal program plans to integrate CRS-based principles

into the guidance and procedures for updating beach management plans to assist local governments with identifying opportunities to obtain higher CRS scores and lowering flood insurance premiums for residents. The coastal program is encouraged to consider the sea level rise-related components of the latest CRS manual when thinking about additional or voluntary components to include in the beach management plan guidance to foster longer-term planning at the community level.

The coastal program also has the opportunity to work with local governments to encourage alignment of beach management plans with local hazard mitigation plans to ensure applicable initiatives and projects are eligible for funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's new Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program. At the time of the evaluation site visit, this effort was on hold due to limited staff capacity.

The City of Folly Beach developed and adopted the state's first voluntary marsh management plan. The plan helps protect the community's existing marsh areas and enabled the community to obtain a higher National Flood Insurance Program CRS score, resulting in reduced flood insurance premiums of \$1,041,103 annually on the cost of flood insurance for its policyholders—or an average of \$652 per policy, which is twice the savings per flood insurance policy as before. A city staff member stated that the development of the plan would have been easier if there had been state guidance available.

The coastal program is encouraged to reinvigorate its efforts to integrate CRS criteria into guidance for beach management plans. In addition, the coastal program is encouraged to develop a voluntary template for a marsh management plan to serve as a guide for interested communities. The template could be designed to highlight opportunities to increase CRS scores and build community resilience. The coastal program is also encouraged to work with communities to support incorporation of beach management plans and new marsh management plans into comprehensive and hazard mitigation plans.

Findings for Beachfront Management

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program has done an excellent job convening working groups and stakeholders to address challenging coastal management issues. The program's skill in convening and facilitating science-to-management applications includes the Shoreline Change Advisory Committee, Blue Ribbon Committee on Shoreline Management, and Beachfront Jurisdictional Lines Stakeholder Workgroup.

Recommendation: The South Carolina Coastal Program is encouraged to capitalize on its expertise in convening experts and stakeholders to initiate a coastwide dialogue concerning implementation of the state's policy of preservation of beaches in the face of rising sea levels, including looking statewide at the vulnerability of the coast, renourishment needs, sand sources, and costs.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to reinvigorate its efforts to integrate the National Flood Insurance Program's

Community Rating System criteria into guidance for local comprehensive beach management plans. In addition, the coastal program is encouraged to develop a voluntary template for a marsh management plan to serve as a guide for interested communities and to work with communities to encourage and support incorporation of beach management plans and new marsh management plans into local comprehensive plans and local hazard mitigation plans.

Coastal Hazards

Post-Storm Recovery

Since 2015, coastal South Carolina has experienced three major storm events: the historic floods in October 2015, Hurricane Matthew in October 2016, and Tropical Storm Irma in 2017. Stakeholders praised the coastal program for listening to feedback and continually improving its response efforts after each major storm. The coastal program actively solicited feedback after each event, and adjusted processes to enhance efficiency and communication. In 2016, coastal program staff established quarterly coordination meetings with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division to improve agency coordination and ensure successful implementation of projects. In response to Hurricane Matthew, coastal program staff members performed coastwide beachfront damage assessments and within two weeks had evaluated 1,466 sites and issued 200-plus emergency permits for structural repair. Emergency orders by the office's overseeing agency enabled residents to use sand bags, sand scraping, and beach renourishment for oceanfront protection. The coastal program used structural engineers on state contract to assess erosion control structures that needed additional assessment or were deemed damaged beyond repair by the coastal program. Department regulatory staff used the assessments to help guide property owners on the appropriate course of action.

This event was the first implementation of the department's revised emergency operations plan, which was updated with improvements after Hurricane Matthew. These steps helped communities and residents recover more quickly. The plan was activated in anticipation of Tropical Storm Irma and staff members performed damage assessments post-storm; however, the scope and extent of impacts from this event were not as significant as those from Matthew.

Beach Monitoring

The coastal program's GIS-based Beach Erosion Research and Monitoring (BERM) Explorer provides the public, local communities, and researchers with access to topographic and bathymetric data for various beach areas in South Carolina. The coastal program conducts annual monitoring of a network of approximately 400 survey monuments along the developed sections of the coast. Staff members collect data along each transect from the monument to 3,000 feet offshore. The BERM profiles can be viewed online using the BERM Explorer (<https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/bermexplorer/>). With the state's new legislation, which now distinguishes between erosion and extraordinary erosion after a storm, there is an increased need to have more data and conduct more monitoring to better understand erosion rates. A number of local governments collect topographic and bathymetric data that are not currently

shared with the state that could help fill this gap. The coastal program could pursue developing, and providing a platform for, the sharing of data between the state and local communities.

Coastal program staff members also complete an annual statewide beachfront structural inventory that documents all known structures within the beachfront jurisdictional area. These structures include habitable structures, pools, and erosion-control devices, such as seawalls, bulkheads, and revetments. The coastal program maintains several GPS units to conduct this work and staff are trained in their use.

Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment

In 2018, the coastal program and partners, including the Department of Natural Resources Geological Survey, performed a hazard vulnerability assessment within the South Carolina Critical Area, coastal waters, tidelands, beaches, and beach dune system. The assessment used the Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment tool, an open-source geospatial tool that includes four components: storm surge, shoreline change, flooding, and social and economic vulnerability. The coastal program worked with department GIS staff members to provide the information online (<https://gis.dhec.sc.gov/hva/>), and the tool is being used by state and local coastal managers and scientists to improve comprehensive and hazard mitigation planning, post-disaster redevelopment, and the determination of areas best suited for restoration and mitigation efforts.

The online tool allows users to map hazard vulnerability assessment rankings from 1 to 5 for the following: Inundation Vulnerability, which combines flooding and storm surge; Inundation + SoVI Vulnerability, which combines flooding, storm surge, and social vulnerability; and Shoreline Change, which combines the shoreline change rate, temporal variability, and spatial variability. Users can examine each hazard component to see what has the most impact in any given area and create files that can be integrated into GIS. The tool provides links to external data sources as well as the Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment tool and AMBUR (Analyzing Moving Boundaries Using R) tool, which was used to create the shoreline change data set.

Charleston Resilience Network

In 2014, the coastal program led the establishment of the Charleston Resilience Network, a public-private collaborative effort to foster a unified strategy and provide a forum to share science-based information, educate stakeholders, and enhance long-term planning decisions that result in resilience. The Coastal Services Section director supported the network by serving as coalition chair, effectively leveraging the coastal program's leadership position in the network to enhance and expand the audience for its programmatic strategies, planning, and technical support services. In addition to having representatives from the public, private, and service-providing sectors, the network is advised by NOAA, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Infrastructure Protection, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District. Since 2015, the Charleston Resilience Network has also partnered with the National Academy of Sciences and the Academy's Resilient America Roundtable. The network has undertaken numerous efforts to build resilience:

- In 2015, the coastal program and network contributed to the development of the City of Charleston's "Sea Level Rise Strategy" and its revision, which was published in February 2019. The city has been working to implement its strategy, including strengthening its stormwater systems and installing backflow prevention devices.
- In February 2016, the network hosted a symposium, in partnership with the National Academy of Sciences, to examine the Charleston region's resilience through the lens of the October 2015 flooding event. Over 75 government officials and community and organizational leaders attended the day-long event. A summary report, "Understanding the October 2015 Charleston Floods" (<https://bit.ly/2SXfebs>), was published.
- In 2016, the network, through its financial fiduciary South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium, was awarded a NOAA Coastal Resilience Grant to produce parcel-level flood vulnerability data and maps and engage in strategic community outreach.
- In 2016, the network was also awarded a National Infrastructure Protection Plan Resilience Challenge grant from the National Institute for Hometown Security to evaluate vulnerability assessment tools, hold focus groups with key sector representatives, and develop a scalable assessment tool for coastal businesses, communities, and municipalities.
- In 2017, the network organized a Knowledge Exchange event with representatives from the Hampton Roads, Virginia region, another low-lying area prone to flooding. Through the course of a two-day workshop, participants were able to compare coastal management challenges associated with sea level rise and land subsidence, and discuss policy options and intervention strategies. This event also served as a template for future Knowledge Exchange events with other coastal regions.

Living Shorelines

There is increasing interest in pursuing living shorelines to stabilize shorelines and reduce erosion, while providing valuable habitat. One of the coastal program's Section 309 strategies for 2016-2020 is the development of success criteria for evaluating the performance of living shorelines, monitoring of existing living shorelines, establishment of a regulatory definition of living shorelines, and the development of specific regulatory project standards for the permitting of living shoreline projects in South Carolina. To achieve these goals, the Living Shorelines Working Group was convened. The coastal program partnered with ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve on a competitive reserve system Science Collaborative project, "Evaluating Living Shorelines to Inform Regulatory Decision-Making in South Carolina," to research and evaluate the effectiveness of different types of living shorelines under different conditions. The project was designed to provide the coastal program with the science-based information and tools necessary to make policy decisions and develop new living shoreline guidelines. The project also included a series of semi-structured interviews of private property owners who had installed living shorelines or were interested in installing a living shoreline to explore opportunities to improve the permitting and installation process. The project report, "Summary of Living Shoreline Research to Inform Regulatory Decision-Making in South Carolina" (<https://bit.ly/2YS88sm>), was completed in August 2019 after the evaluation site visit. The coastal program is encouraged to work with stakeholders and experts to incorporate the

latest science into developing project guidance and regulations for the permitting and construction of living shorelines, where appropriate. The coastal program is also encouraged to pursue opportunities to work with partners to develop and host living shoreline training for marine contractors and other efforts to address the challenges expressed by private property owners.

South Carolina My Coast

The coastal program created a MyCoast: South Carolina website (<https://mycoast.org/sc>) to engage citizens in science and assist the program with addressing coastal hazards. The site has four tools—King Tides, Storm Witness, Abandoned Boats, and Adopt-a-Beach—that support coastal program initiatives. The site enables over 1,100 registered users to submit reports and photos to capture the impacts of South Carolina’s highest tides, document storm damage, record abandoned and derelict boats, and track beach cleanups.

King Tides Initiative

The coastal program implemented its King Tides initiative to raise awareness of coastal hazards and flooding. The department defines a king tide as a predicted or observed tidal event that meets or exceeds 6.6 feet above mean lower low water at the Charleston Harbor tide station. Kicking off the initiative in 2014, the department added crown icons identifying king tides to its annual tide chart, helping the new initiative gain media attention. The coastal program also developed a MyCoast mobile app to engage citizen scientists in documenting the impact of nuisance tidal flooding throughout the coast. Citizen scientists submit time-stamped and geo-located photos with their smartphones, which are then augmented with data associated with observed and predicted water level, and meteorological and atmospheric conditions that provide additional context for analysis. The information is synthesized into event summaries on the web-based MyCoast site. The pictures and reports provide the public with images and information on tidal flooding along the coast, and data from the project are routinely requested by environmental and social scientists.

The coastal program has capitalized on other partnerships as well to communicate coastal hazards risks and king tides. In 2016, the coastal program worked with Enough Pie, a Charleston-based nonprofit organization, and the Charleston Resilience Network for a month-long series of community events, *Awakening V: King Tides*. The coastal program worked closely with scientists, artists, and community organizers to ensure effective communication of technical information to lay audiences through publications, speaking, and educational events and art installations.

Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Removal

South Carolina is seeing more abandoned vessels as other eastern seaboard states tighten restrictions on vessels. Jurisdiction over abandoned and derelict vessels in South Carolina is currently a coordinated effort among federal and state agencies, including the coastal program, Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Coast Guard, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and local law enforcement. Since 2004, the

coastal program has worked with federal and state partners to leverage the removal of more than 100 derelict vessels from South Carolina's coastal waters. From 2015 to 2019, 36 abandoned vessels were reported through the MyCoast Abandoned Boat reporting tool. In 2018, the coastal program was awarded supplemental grant funding from NOAA for post-Irma marine debris removal and disposal in South Carolina for the removal of five vessels from the Ashley River–Charleston Harbor area, in partnership with the City of Charleston and the Charleston City Marina. The evaluation team was able to watch the removal of one of the boats, and an additional 11 vessels were slated for removal from the Folly River in July 2019. The coastal program has been successful in obtaining federal grants for abandoned vessel removal, but there is no consistent funding at the state level for vessel removal. In 2016, the coastal program convened an Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Working Group to examine the challenges associated with vessel abandonment and develop recommendations for improved management. The working group contributed to the development of the NOAA Marine Debris Program's, "South Carolina Marine Debris Emergency Response Guide: Comprehensive Guidance Document" (<https://bit.ly/3cv9QnO>). At the time of the evaluation site visit, the working group was inactive. The coastal program is encouraged to identify strategies to address abandoned vessels and to provide guidance and assistance to local governments. The program might look to other states for potential examples, such as Florida's proposed Vessel Turn-In Program from the Florida Keys, modeled after successful programs in West Coast states; Georgia's recent Abandoned and Derelict Vessel legislation; or Connecticut's use of municipal moorings that are assigned by municipal harbor masters who watch their harbor.

Outreach and Communication

The ability to communicate the science and facts about key coastal management issues is very important to assist with successfully addressing those issues. The coastal program's use of technology to provide information and engage the public has been very successful with its King Tides Initiative and Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Reporting Tool. The coastal program has also developed a suite of GIS applications that provide information on beachfront jurisdictional lines, beach renourishment, beach profile monitoring, and public access. The coastal program has also worked to streamline web content and utilize the online public comment feature of ePermitting to gather feedback on regulatory activities.

There are opportunities for the coastal program to continue to strengthen its ability to communicate and reach diverse audiences, including partners, members of the public, marine contractors, and elected officials and their staffs. Opportunities could include further explaining jurisdictional lines to the public, updating South Carolina's homeowners' guide, and sharing success stories with the public through the program's website and social media. Other possibilities include sharing the latest science-based information with elected officials and their staffs, creating an email list to provide partner organizations with updates, and hosting a periodic coastal summit to bring people together to share information and discuss solutions to coastal issues.

Findings for Coastal Hazards

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program has a culture of learning and improvement and actively seeks feedback after hazard events to improve the state’s hazard preparedness and response. This has that resulted in communities being able to recover more quickly from storm impacts through improved interagency coordination and increased efficiency in evaluating damage to sites and issuance of emergency permits for structure repair.

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program has used technology to provide citizens and local governments with the information and tools they need to make informed decisions and has engaged them in coastal management through the MyCoast application, Coastal Hazards Vulnerability Assessment Tool, and Beach Erosion Research and Monitoring (BERM) Explorer.

Accomplishment: The South Carolina Coastal Program partnership with ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve on the reserve system’s Science Collaborative project, “Evaluating Living Shorelines to Inform Regulatory Decision-Making in South Carolina,” has yielded science-based information and tools that are informing the coastal program’s development of policies and guidance for living shorelines.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to continue to strengthen its ability to communicate and reach diverse audiences, including partners, members of the public, marine contractors, and elected officials and their staffs.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the South Carolina Coastal Program to identify strategies to address abandoned vessels and to provide guidance and assistance to local governments.

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. In 2018, coastal programs began a new five-year period and set targets specific to their programs for two performance measures from the existing Coastal Zone Management Performance Measurement System and the coastal hazards performance measure.

Evaluation Metrics: 2012-2017

Metric 1

Goal: Improve Coordination with Regulated Community.

Objective: Improve the timeliness and efficiency of regulatory decision making.

Strategy: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program is directed under §48-39-80 of the Coastal Tidelands and Wetlands Act to determine ways to streamline and simplify permitting processes. Under current Coastal Division regulations, the Department of Health and Environmental Control’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has up to 90 days to issue a decision for a critical area permit, depending upon the type of activity, and varying time frames for federal consistency determinations. Currently, 90 percent of critical area permits are issued within required time frames. The time frame for issuing a state coastal zone consistency of land disturbance activities is 120 days. Basing its analysis on a recently concluded Process Improvement Team, the staff recommended modifying this 120-day time frame to 30 days. To accomplish this reduced time frame, the applicant will be required to provide documentation verifying consistency with program policies. This change takes effect in April 2012; however, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management anticipates that this new process will take several months to fully implement.

Performance Measure: The percentage of critical area permitting actions and coastal zone consistency determinations completed within prescribed time frames over a five-year period.

Target: 100% of critical area permitting actions and coastal zone consistency determinations completed within prescribed time frames over a five-year period.

Results:	Year 1	99.8% (405/406) completed within prescribed time frames
	Year 2	100% (350/350) completed within prescribed time frames
	Year 3	100% (552/552) completed within prescribed time frames
	Year 4	100% (534/534) completed within prescribed time frames
	Year 5	Data from this year is excluded from the overall calculation *During year 5 staff were responding to Hurricane Matthew and issuing Emergency General Permits for Critical Area activities. A total of 540 Critical Area Permits and 287 Hurricane Matthew Emergency General Permits were issued.
	Total:	99.9457%

Discussion: The coastal program met their target as the results of this measure round to 100% of the critical area permitting actions and coastal zone consistency determinations being completed within the prescribed time frames. Only one action out of 1,842 fell outside of the prescribed time frames over a 4-year period.

Metric 2

Goal: Protect South Carolina’s Public Trust Resources.

Objective: Reduce the amount of marine debris in coastal waters and within the beach and dune system by increasing participation in the Adopt a Beach program.

Strategy: The South Carolina Coastal Management Program administers the Adopt a Beach program under §48-39-85 of the Coastal Tidelands and Wetlands Act and R. 30-11 (E) of the South Carolina Code of Regulations. Currently, the Adopt a Beach program has 39 volunteer

organizations participating in routine cleanup efforts along South Carolina’s beaches. The South Carolina Coastal Management Program recently deployed an online reporting form that volunteer organizations can use to log information about their efforts, including the number of participants, the total hours spent at each location, and the type and volume of debris collected during each site visit. In 2011, the volunteer organizations reported a total of 421 hours using the online reporting form. This figure will be used as the baseline to gauge future improvements. The South Carolina Coastal Management Program is considering ways to raise awareness and encourage participation in this program, including an enhanced marketing and promotional campaign.

Performance Measure: Number of volunteer hours of participation in the Adopt a Beach Program.

Target: By 2017, report a total of 526 volunteer hours of participation in the Adopt a Beach program.

Results:	Year 1	757 volunteer hours completed
	Year 2	1,040 volunteer hours completed
	Year 3	1,190 volunteer hours completed
	Year 4	1,148 volunteer hours completed
	Year 5	650 volunteer hours completed
	Total:	5, 311 volunteer hours completed

Discussion: The coastal program exceeded its 5-year target each of the 5 years. The coastal program has seen strong growth from the baseline of 421 hours in 2011, although growth plateaued in years 3 and 4 and there was a dip in year 5. During year 5, Adopt a Beach activities were transitioning to MyCoast, a new tracking system, which may have resulted in lower numbers being reported. In retrospect, the target should have been set at a significantly higher level.

Metric 3

Goal: Minimize Risks to Beachfront Communities

Objective: Strengthen interactions with local governments through improved technical assistance and beachfront management planning to reduce community vulnerability to disasters.

Strategy: In accordance with §48-39-320 and 350 of the SC Coastal Tidelands and Wetlands Act, the South Carolina Coastal Management Program provides technical assistance to local governments in developing and updating local comprehensive beach management plans.

These plans are integral to the effective management of the state’s beachfront and coastal zone. The South Carolina Coastal Management Program recently developed improved guidelines that detail the process for state review and approval of local plans and standardize the format and type of information provided. The guidelines recommend that beachfront communities consider additional approaches to reduce community vulnerabilities. The South

Carolina Coastal Management Program is currently utilizing these guidelines with several local beachfront communities and is continuing to update the guidelines to reflect local government feedback.

Performance Measure: Number of local beachfront communities that adopt revised local comprehensive beach management plans over a five-year period.

Target: Nine local beachfront communities that adopt revised local comprehensive beach management plans over a five-year period.

Results:	Year 1	3 communities adopt revised beach management plans
	Year 2	1 community adopts revised beach management plan
	Year 3	2 communities adopt revised beach management plans
	Year 4	1 community adopts revised beach management plan
	Year 5	1 community adopts revised beach management plan

Total: 8 communities adopt revised beach management plans

Discussion: The coastal program did not meet its target but came close with eight communities adopting revised beach management plans.

Evaluation Metrics: 2018-2023

Beginning in 2018, state coastal management programs began tracking their success in addressing three evaluation metrics specifically drawn from the Coastal Zone Management Act Performance Measurement System. 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: Expand usage of the ePermitting platform and Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management web applications by municipal, state, and federal partners.

Objective: Between 2018 and 2023, increase the number of municipal government, state, and federal partners utilizing the ePermitting platform and Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management web applications through targeted training opportunities.

Strategy: The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management transitioned all Critical Area Permitting activities to ePermitting in May 2017. Subsequently, Coastal Zone Consistency transitioned federal and state certifications to ePermitting in fall 2017. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management is currently coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers to utilize ePermitting for joint permit applications and plans to expand ePermitting to all direct federal activities during this evaluation period. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management will develop training materials and other resources and will provide focused training opportunities for federal partners. In addition, Coastal Services Section staff will provide training events for local municipal partners on the use of Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management’s web applications, particularly the Beach Renourishment, Beachfront

Jurisdictional Lines Viewer, and BERM Explorer web applications, to help inform local planning efforts and decision making.

Performance Measure: Between 2018 and 2023, the number of training events related to government coordination offered by the South Carolina Coastal Management Program.

Target: Between 2018 and 2023, 20 training events related to government coordination offered by the South Carolina Coastal Management Program.

Results: Year 1 9 training events related to government coordination

Discussion: The coastal program held 9 training events during the first year all focused on beachfront jurisdictional lines and the revision process. The coastal program is already almost halfway to meeting the target.

Metric 2

Goal: Maintain and enhance public access to South Carolina’s coastal resources in coordination with municipal government partners through Coastal Access Improvement grants, the Keep off the Dunes cost share program, and the Beach Access and Water Quality Guide.

Objective: Between 2018 and 2023, increase the number of public access locations maintained and enhanced through Coastal Zone Management Program funding or coordination with Coastal Zone Management Program staff (5b), as well as increase public usage of the Beach Access and Water Quality Guide.

Strategy: The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management periodically funds Coastal Access Improvement grants to local municipalities for the creation or enhancement of public access sites within the coastal zone. During this period, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management will identify state or federal 306A funds for public access improvements. In addition, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management will encourage increased participation in the Keep off the Dunes cost-share program, which allows municipal partners to receive Keep off the Dunes signs at a reduced cost in exchange for reporting locally funded improvements to public beach access sites. This information, along with any Coastal Zone Management Program-funded access improvements, will be updated in the Beach Access and Water Quality Guide. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management Coastal Services Section utilizes this GIS-based web application to improve public accessibility to public beach access information and water quality monitoring data. Staff will be working to improve the functionality of the application, as well as periodically promoting it on Department of Health and Environmental Control social media platforms. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management is able to use analytics for each web application to assess peak usage times during the year, the number of new and returning visitors, and the total number of sessions.

Performance Measure: Between 2018 and 2023, the number of existing public access sites enhanced with assistance from Coastal Zone Management Program funding or staff.

Target: Between 2018 and 2023, 30 existing public access sites enhanced with assistance from Coastal Zone Management Program funding or staff.

Results: Year 1 0 public access sites enhanced

Discussion: The coastal program is not on track to meet its target. Management of the Beach Renourishment Funding grant program was recently moved from the coastal program to the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Funds from this program help support public access site enhancements. Despite this change, the coastal program remains committed to its efforts and support of local government efforts to enhance public access sites. As this major source of funding for public access enhancements is no longer under the purview of the coastal program, the coastal program may wish to reevaluate its 5-year target.

Metric 3

Goal: Provide planning and technical assistance, tools, and other resources to local governments to support resilience to coastal hazards.

Objective: Between 2018 and 2023, increase the number of local governments completing policies, plans, or projects in coordination with Coastal Zone Management Program staff to reduce future damage from coastal hazards.

Strategy: The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management currently provides technical and planning assistance to local governments in the development and revision of local comprehensive beach management plans, ordinance development, and other local planning efforts. Under the current Section 309 strategy for Coastal Hazards, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management is working with local governments to incorporate Community Rating System principles into local comprehensive beach management plans as one mechanism to increase awareness of and help promote resilience to coastal hazards. The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has also developed a number of GIS-based web applications, including the Beach Renourishment, Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, and BERM Explorer web applications that improve public accessibility to shoreline data, erosion rate information and coastal hazards assessments.

DHEC OCRM anticipates a) 0 state-level policies and plans completed; b) 10 local-level policies and plans completed; c) 0 projects completed at the state level; or d) 0 projects completed at the local level to reduce future damage from coastal hazards with assistance from CZM funding or staff

Performance Measure: Between 2018 and 2023, number of a) state-level policies and plans completed; b) local-level policies and plans completed; c) projects completed at the state level; and d) projects completed at the local level to reduce future damage from coastal hazards with assistance from Coastal Zone Management Program funding or staff.

Target: Between 2018 and 2023, a total of ten a) state-level policies and plans completed; b) local-level policies and plans completed; c) projects completed at the state level; or d) projects

completed at the local level to reduce future damage from coastal hazards with assistance from Coastal Zone Management Program funding or staff.

Results: Year 1 = 3 (2 state-level policies and plans completed and 1 state-level project)

Discussion: The coastal program is on track to meet its 5-year target.

Conclusion

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

These evaluation findings contain six recommendations that must be considered before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation but that 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 South Carolina Coastal 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 by Jeffrey Payne
Jeffrey L. Payne, Ph.D.
Director, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

dated July 2, 2020
Date

Appendix A: Response to Written Comments

Duane Parrish, Director
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism

Mr. Parrish expressed his agency's appreciation for the coastal program's collaborative spirit and its demonstrated support of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) and its Beach Renourishment Funding grant program. Coastal program staff members have shared their experience and knowledge working with local governments to conduct beach renourishment projects as SCPRT staff have established a new grant program for beach renourishment, and coastal program staff members have participated in the review of grant applications. He credits the coastal program's support as being instrumental in the successful development and administration of the SCPRT's Beach Renourishment Funding grant program.

NOAA Office for Coastal Management Response: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management thanks Mr. Parrish for his comments. No response required.