



Eight “Good to Know” Sections of the Coastal Zone Management Act

The Coastal Zone Management Act, or CZMA, was passed in 1972 to comprehensively manage uses and resources of the nation’s coastal zone. The act creates a state–federal partnership, where coastal states (seaboard states, including Great Lakes states, and U.S. territories and commonwealths) may elect to develop comprehensive coastal management programs that meet federal standards.

The CZMA includes a number of sections relevant to the development, implementation, and funding of these federally approved coastal management programs. You may hear colleagues refer to the Coastal Zone Management Act and specific sections. Listed below are the more commonly referred-to sections and those that can help you better understand your job. For a complete list of section descriptions, see “[Section-by-Section Descriptions of the Coastal Zone Management Act](#).”

Section 304 – Definitions

This section defines important terms used in the CZMA, such as “coastal zone,” “coastal resource of national significance,” “coastal waters,” “coastal state,” “coastal energy activity,” “energy facilities,” and “enforceable policy.”

Good to know because definitions are important in the development and implementation of a coastal management program.

Section 306 – Administrative Grants

This section contains the requirements for coastal management program approval. It also contains requirements for public participation and for considering the views of federal agencies, as well as allows a state to amend its coastal management program. The section provides for annual implementation grants to states. Funds are allocated by a formula that is based on shoreline mileage and the population of the coastal area.

Good to know because it helps with understanding why coastal management programs include certain elements, such as coastal zone boundaries, and how to change aspects of a program. It also explains why programs receive annual CZMA federal funding support.

Section 306A – Coastal Resource Improvement Program

This section allows states to purchase ecologically sensitive areas and areas needed for recreation; construct low-cost public access facilities; revitalize deteriorating urban waterfronts; restore shellfish beds; and complete other related projects. All acquisition and construction projects are subject to section 306A requirements.

Good to know because it helps with understanding what types of projects are eligible for 306A funding.

Section 307 – Coordination and Cooperation (or “Federal Consistency”)

This section requires that federal actions that have reasonably foreseeable effects on any coastal use (land or water) or natural resource of the coastal zone be conducted in a manner consistent with the enforceable policies of state coastal management programs. These requirements apply to federal agencies; non-federal entities applying for required federal permits, licenses, and other authorizations; and state and local government applicants for federal financial assistance. The federal actions and the state coastal uses or resources affected can be within and outside the state’s coastal zone.

Good to know because it helps with understanding “federal consistency,” a unique and powerful tool that coastal management programs use to ensure that federal agencies and non-federal applicants conduct their coastal activities in accordance with the enforceable policies of the state’s coastal zone management program.

Section 309 – Coastal Zone Enhancement Grants

This section provides funds to coastal states to make improvements in their coastal management programs in the areas of wetlands, coastal hazards, public access, marine debris, cumulative and secondary impacts, special area management plans, ocean management, energy facility siting, and aquaculture.

Good to know because coastal management programs use this resource to address both long-standing and emerging critical coastal issues.

Section 312 – Review of Performance

This section requires the secretary of commerce to conduct a continuing review of state coastal management programs to ensure that states are adhering to their federally approved coastal management programs. The secretary may withdraw funds and federal approval if a state is in noncompliance.

Good to know because it helps with understanding the 312 evaluation process and how coastal management programs can use the results for program improvement.

Section 315 – National Estuarine Research Reserve System

This section provides for the designation of estuarine research reserves in states to enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas, provide opportunities for public education, and encourage research to support the protection of these areas and a state’s coastal management program.

Good to know because reserves provide opportunities to collaborate and to leverage education, training, research, and stewardship resources to support coastal management.

Section 6217 of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990 – the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program

This section, codified separately from the CZMA, requires states to develop programs and identify best practices to manage the effects of nonpoint pollution on coastal waters. This work is done in collaboration with state water quality, public health, agriculture, forestry, and other agencies, and offices that have responsibility for managing activities that can contribute to nonpoint sources of pollution.

Good to know because information about coastal nonpoint program requirements can help with understanding one of the tools coastal management programs use to address nonpoint pollution.