

CHAPTER 2

THE MASSACHUSETTS COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Coastal Massachusetts

The Massachusetts coast includes over 1,500 miles of rocky shores, sand beaches, productive estuaries, fragile salt marshes, large urban harbors, smaller town harbors and marinas, open spaces, tidal flats, and dozens of islands. For centuries the Massachusetts coast has offered protective shelter, natural ports, and a means of commercial livelihood for its citizens and today many Massachusetts residents still live, work, and recreate by the sea.

Just over 2 million of the state's 6 million residents live in Massachusetts coastal communities, an area comprising less than a quarter of the landmass of the Commonwealth, yet more than half of all current development in the state occurs in the coastal zone. Many suburban and rural coastal communities have experienced two-fold, three-fold, and, in some cases, four-fold increases in population over the past ten years. This trend is especially true for the south shore suburban communities and some of the towns on Cape Cod. Following a period in which the urban ports experienced declining populations and revenues, there is renewed and sometimes conflicting interest in maritime, residential, and recreational development throughout the coastal region.

The coast supports facilities and industries important to the economy of the entire state. Three-fourths of all energy supplies enter Massachusetts through an urban port, though, as power generators convert to gas, this fraction is declining. Of 41 operating electrical power plants in the state, 23 are located along the coast. Tourists spent \$10.8 billion in Massachusetts in 1997; of this amount, \$6.3 billion was spent in coastal counties¹. Commercial fishing, including fresh and frozen fish processing, and supporting transportation and marketing services, is a 4 billion-dollar industry² in the Commonwealth.

These economic activities are dependent on the physical and biological resources of the coastal zone for their existence. Clean, productive ocean and riverine waters are necessary to support fisheries, shellfishing, and to protect endangered marine mammals. Estuaries provide protected ports for maritime industries and shipping. Fringing coastal vegetation is nursery habitat for many species of marine animals. Processes that erode coastal sediments naturally renourish the beaches that support wildlife and provide recreational opportunities for millions of people.

The very resources, therefore, which attract so many interests to the coastal zone and support myriad activities and uses are themselves endangered. Quite often differing activities

¹ *Domestic Direct Traveler Impact on Massachusetts Counties: 1997*, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism

² *The Massachusetts Fresh Marine Fish Marketplace*, March 31, 1998, Massachusetts Department of Fish, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement

demand the same resources, the same scarce or fragile piece of land and water. But, since coastal resources are finite, it is impossible to meet the needs of all of the conflicting demands for uses and activities along the coast. Coastal resources need to be carefully managed if they are not to become depleted.

Solutions to issues and problems of erosion, flooding, dredging, sewage treatment, protection of critical environmental areas and resources, transportation, economic development, port redevelopment, harbor management, marine development, air and water quality planning, improved recreation facilities and access and energy facilities siting, all call for a broad regional or statewide perspective.

The Massachusetts Coastal Program

Following a two year development process, the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program Plan was approved by OCRM in 1978.

The mission of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management is to balance the impact of human activities with the protection of coastal and marine resources. This mission is carried out through planning, public involvement, education, research, and sound resource management. Since its inception, the CZM Program has offered technical assistance to communities; has used its federal consistency jurisdiction to ensure that projects proposed in the coastal zone are consistent with CZM policies; and has set a high priority on placing the state's regulatory and management programs into a coastal framework, making them work in a more assured, timely and consistent manner.

The CZM Program is recognized under Massachusetts law in M.G.L. c.21A, §4A (Appendix B), and is regulated under 301 CMR 20.00 – 26.00.

Program Structure

Massachusetts has chosen to develop a “networked” coastal management program. As such, CZM is not a state permitting agency. Instead, CZM has entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOAs) with state environmental permitting agencies that ensure that all relevant state environmental regulations and permits will be consistent with state coastal policies, found in this Program Plan. CZM works closely with other state agencies and project proponents during the permitting of projects proposed in the coastal zone to assure that its interests are addressed.

Program Organization

The CZM Program is a program within the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and is under the direction of the Secretary of EOEA. A Director, who is also an Assistant Secretary of Environmental Affairs, and such Deputy and/or Assistant

Directors as he or she may appoint, manage the CZM program.

Since the Program's inception in 1978, CZM has had four regional offices in the North Shore, Boston Harbor, South Coastal area, and Cape Cod and the Islands. In 2000, the Metro Boston office was renamed the Boston Harbor office and the South Coastal office was divided into two regional offices, the South Shore and South Coastal. Regional Coordinators provide services to municipalities such as harbor planning, resource management planning in Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and they administer a number of state grant programs.

CZM's staff also includes of a number of technical experts in areas such as water quality, wetland habitat, coastal geology, dredging, public access, coastal engineering, fisheries and shellfish, endangered species, geographic information systems, and federal consistency. These staff provide information and technical support to CZM regional staff, project proponents, municipalities, and other public agencies. Appendix A lists CZM contacts and telephone numbers.

Since its development in the 1970's, the Massachusetts coastal program has benefited from the advice of the Coastal Resources Advisory Board (CRAB). CRAB is made up of 16 citizen representatives of statewide educational, business, and public interest organizations, as well as government agencies with a role in the coastal program. CRAB members are appointed by the Governor and the Secretary of EOEA. As individuals who are directly affected by CZM activities, CRAB members bring a unique perspective to coastal issues. CRAB's purpose is to ensure that Massachusetts' Coastal Zone Management Program maintains a close connection to the communities, citizens, and interest groups that it serves.