

Final Evaluation Findings

Wisconsin Coastal Management Program

July 2008 to May 2017

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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 Wisconsin Coastal Management Program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, the designated lead agency, for the period from July 2008 to May 2017. The evaluation focused on three target areas: program administration; coastal hazards and resilience; and economic development, social justice, and public access.

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

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program's technical assistance and financial support have been the "catalyst" for projects that have become much larger initiatives and have improved public safety and the economic, environmental, and social conditions of coastal communities. The coastal program is a model for how a competitive small grants program can have an outsized impact. Examples highlighted in the findings include the revitalization of brownfields in the Menomonee Valley, Oak Creek, Racine, and Port Washington, and improving the safety for swimmers on the lakeshore and visitors to the Apostle Islands.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program's initiative, leadership, and support led to the designation of the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program's leadership in coastal hazards and the Coastal Hazards Working Group has brought together experts and stakeholders to enable local communities and the state to improve public safety. For example, the coastal program worked with partners and provided funding to develop new tools to monitor hazardous conditions and provide information, education, and equipment to improve public safety at public beaches and the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The Wisconsin Coastal Program also successfully applied for funding and worked with partners to obtain LiDAR data covering the coastal areas of the state that will inform the state's hazard mitigation efforts.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program has sought out and engaged underserved coastal communities in initiatives to improve coastal management. Examples highlighted in the findings include Menomonee Valley, Oak Creek, Racine's Root River, and the G-WOW education model.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program has provided technical and financial support to communities to ensure that water quality and public access are part of brownfield revitalization initiatives.

Accomplishment: The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for its work with partners to identify and acquire priority parcels for habitat protection and public access.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Department of Administration, coastal program, and Department of Natural Resources to update the Memorandum of Understanding between the departments and as part of this effort identify shared coastal management priorities and opportunities.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Department of Administration and Wisconsin Coastal Program to continue to look to other external funding sources, including other types of federal and state funding, to diversify funding and meet a growing demand.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Department of Administration and Wisconsin Coastal Program to fill the program and policy analyst position with a highly qualified applicant to ensure the coastal program continues to function at a high level.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue to pursue options to ensure timely completion of projects, including continuing to work with NOAA to ensure that needed information is collected as early as possible, considering moving the selection process earlier in the year, and considering a multi-year award.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to address coastal hazards by continuing to utilize existing partnerships to work with local governments and community groups; educating citizens and decision makers; developing and implementing new tools and methods; and developing plans and policies to reduce the risk of coastal hazards to public safety and property.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Coastal Program and Wisconsin Coastal Council to share their expertise in catalyzing and participating in initiatives that improve public safety and the economic, environmental and social conditions of underserved communities with other state coastal management programs and interested entities.

This evaluation concludes that the Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin Coastal Management Program in fiscal year 2017. The evaluation team consisted of Carrie Hall, evaluation team lead; Elizabeth Mountz, site liaison; Heather Stirratt, Great Lakes regional lead; and Justine Nihipali, program manager for the Hawaii Coastal Zone Management Program. The support of the Wisconsin 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 secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Administration, published a notice of “Intent to Evaluate” in the *Federal Register* on April 14, 2017 (Fed. Reg. 2017-07561), and notified members of Wisconsin’s congressional delegation. The coastal management program posted a notice of the public meeting and opportunity to comment in the *Wisconsin State Journal* on April 17, 2017.

The evaluation process included a review of relevant documents and a survey of stakeholders, which helped identify three target areas for the evaluation: program administration; coastal hazards and resilience; and economic development, social justice, and public access. 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, May 31, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. local time at the Port Administration Building, 2323 South Lincoln Memorial Drive, Milwaukee Wisconsin, to provide an opportunity for members of the public to express their opinions about the implementation of the program. Stakeholders and members of the public were also given the opportunity to provide written comments. No written comments were received. NOAA then developed draft evaluation findings, which were provided to the Wisconsin Department of Administration 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 implementing regulations of the Coastal Zone Management Act and of the state coastal management program approved by NOAA. These must be carried out by the date specified. Failure to address necessary actions may result in a future finding of non-adherence and the invoking of interim sanctions, as specified in the Coastal Zone Management Act §312(c).

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

Evaluation Findings

Program Administration

Networked Structure

The lead agency for the coastal program is the Department of Administration. It is a networked program, guided by the governor-appointed Wisconsin Coastal Management Council and implemented in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources; Department of Transportation; Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection; Department of Tourism; Department of Public Instruction; Wisconsin Emergency Management, and the Public Service Commission.

The Wisconsin Coastal Management Council is a 14-member advisory group for the coastal program. The council provides guidance to the coastal program and has a number of responsibilities, including annually reviewing grant funding priorities and categories to make sure they meet coastal community needs, reviewing and ranking of projects, and coastal advocacy. The council provides important links to coastal communities. Council board meetings provide an opportunity for coastal program partners to network with council members and opportunities for education on coastal issues. The council and coastal program staff appear to function well together.

The previous evaluation findings contained a program suggestion that “OCRM strongly encourages the WCMP to review their relationship with other state agencies concerning federal consistency and to subsequently update the Memoranda of Understanding with those partners in order to strengthen, clarify, and streamline their Federal Consistency process.” In 2010, the coastal program updated its memoranda of understanding with the Public Service Commission and Department of Transportation. The coastal program drafted changes to the memorandum of understanding with the Department of Natural Resources but the memorandum was never signed. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Department of Administration, coastal program, and Department of Natural Resources to update the Memorandum of Understanding between the departments and as part of this effort identify shared coastal management priorities and opportunities to more closely align any activities funded with Coastal Zone Management Act funding.

Program Changes

The coastal program did not submit any program changes during the evaluation period. Having an up-to-date program ensures that federal agency actions are consistent with a state’s coastal policies. The office encourages the coastal program to consider if any enforceable policies need to be updated and if a program change should be submitted.

Funding

The coastal program has been very successful in using its limited funding to improve coastal management and in competing for additional funding sources, such as through NOAA's Regional Coastal Resilience Awards and Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. However, there continues to be a demand for funding and assistance to address coastal management issues, particularly in areas with underserved communities. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Department of Administration and Wisconsin Coastal Program to continue to look to other external funding sources, including other types of federal and state funding, to diversify funding and meet a growing demand.

Staffing

The coastal program staff members were commended by partners and stakeholders for their expertise, knowledge, problem solving, and ability to bring people and funding together to make projects happen. They were described as "phenomenal," "responsive," "dedicated," and "problem solvers."

The coastal program has six full-time staff positions. At the time of the site visit, two of the six positions were vacant, and one position remains vacant as of September 2018. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Department of Administration and coastal program to fill the program and policy analyst position with a highly qualified applicant to ensure that the coastal program can continue to operate at a high level. Stakeholders and partners praised the staff's technical expertise and ability to provide connections with the right experts and funding sources, and stated that this was essential in enabling them to complete projects. The office also encourages the coastal program to continue to pursue supplementing its staff through other means, such as bringing on fellows and sharing staff members.

The coastal program is successfully supplementing its staff and completing specific projects through the use of coastal fellowships. At the time of the site visit, the coastal program had two fellows on staff. The coastal program is challenged in that federal fellowships require a funding match, and the coastal program is supported with limited state funding that can be used as match.

The evaluation team was impressed with the coastal program's commitment and success with working with underserved communities and incorporation of public access, coastal habitat and stormwater management, and economic development into projects. These types of initiatives require a wide array of expertise. The coastal program is able to access additional expertise, for example, economic expertise through its coordination with Community Development Block Grant project partners. However, the coastal program could benefit from increased access to social science expertise and expertise in working with underserved communities. One option is to work with an organization such as the Government Alliance on Race and Equity that provides long-term training to boost state government capacity. The California Coastal Program is currently using this approach.

The coastal program's workload has increased with increasing federal grant requirements. During the evaluation period, there were some challenges with ensuring that all federal grant requirements were met. Recently, the coastal program hired a new program and policy analyst who has successfully been working with NOAA to ensure that projects meet requirements, including those under the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue to build the expertise of at least one staff member with regard to managing federal grants to ensure that federal requirements are met.

Coastal Management Grants Program

The coastal program distributes approximately \$1.5 million in funding through its coastal management grants program annually. The coastal program has also successfully managed other grant funding to support coastal management activities in Wisconsin, including Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program projects, a Regional Coastal Resilience project, and US Geological Survey's 3D Elevation Program. Through its grants program, the coastal program supports the coastal management efforts of local communities, tribal units of government, state agencies, colleges and universities, schools, and nonprofits. The coastal program and council determine priorities annually, and programs can receive bonus points on their applications for several elements, including engaging underrepresented communities and building partnerships. Many of the projects supported economic development and work with underrepresented communities. The grants program was cited by a number of stakeholders as crucial, because it was the only grants program they knew of that would fund initial planning efforts. They also stated that receiving the grant and support of the coastal program demonstrated "belief" in the possibility of positive changes, which gave them credibility with other funders when applying for resources to implement the plans. As one stakeholder put it, "If experts are willing to fund us, perhaps we are not crazy."

Coastal program staff members also provide technical expertise and assistance and help connect grantees to additional resources. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasize the necessity of the coastal program and the value of its role in investing early in initiatives to improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of coastal areas. The Office for Coastal Management commends the Wisconsin Coastal Program for being the "catalyst" for projects that have become much larger initiatives and have improved coastal management, including the economic, environmental, and social conditions of coastal communities. In addition, the office commends the coastal program for its management of additional grants that have supported coastal management in the state. The office encourages the coastal program to consider pursuing a study of the return of investment of its "seeding" of initiatives that have improved coastal management in the state, including the economic, environmental, and social conditions of coastal communities.

Coastal program staff members have worked to improve the grant process and revised the progress report templates to better capture performance measure data. Recipients also complimented the templates for making their reporting easier. The coastal program has also

invested in a database to improve the program's ability to address historic preservation and National Environmental Protection Act requirements.

The federal requirements for implementing the National Environmental Protection Act and historic preservation mean that many grant recipients are challenged with completing grant projects within 18 months. Projects are usually approved after the start of the grant, and recipients cannot work on construction projects during the winter. To address this concern, the coastal program now requires recipients to break projects into planning projects and construction projects. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to continue to pursue options to ensure timely completion of projects, including continuing to work with NOAA to ensure that needed information is collected as early as possible, considering moving the selection process earlier in the year, and considering a multi-year award.

Grant recipients expressed a desire to learn more about best practices developed through the coastal management grants program. The coastal program is planning to provide opportunities for sharing regarding hazards through its current 309 hazards strategy. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to consider regional meetings with presentations on best practices and time for participants to discuss. The coastal program may also wish to consider supporting transfer grants to support knowledge transfer among local communities.

Regional and National Collaboration and Contributions

The coastal program has made significant contributions to both national and regional coastal management and has utilized this work to improve coastal management in Wisconsin. The coastal program is an active member of the Coastal States Organization, and the program manager served as the chair from 2014 to 2016. Staff also participate in various work groups to advise the Coastal States Organization and NOAA on policies and program administration.

The coastal program also serves in a number of state and regional groups. For example, the coastal program manager serves on NOAA's Great Lakes Regional Coordination Team, and staff members serve on the Great Lakes Beach Association Board of Directors, Great Lakes Water Safety Consortium Leadership Team, and Leadership Team for the Lake Michigan Trails Network. The coastal program is also working closely with NOAA on the St. Louis River Habitat Blueprint Focus Area Initiative and has served on the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force to enhance the Great Lakes maritime transportation system and develop a regional strategy.

Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve

In 2002, the coastal program funded a feasibility study for the creation of a national estuarine research reserve. The feasibility study led to grassroots support for the creation of a reserve on the Lake Superior coast. In 2006, the site-selection process was initiated, and the coastal program lead the multi-agency partnership to select the reserve site. In 2008, the governor nominated the St. Louis River for designation. The coastal program continued to provide staff support, and in October 2010 the Lake Superior Reserve was designated by NOAA. The coastal program is an active member of the Reserve Advisory Board along with the City of Superior, Douglas County,

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, University Wisconsin-Superior, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for its leadership role in the designation of the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Findings for Program Administration

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program’s technical assistance and financial support have been the “catalyst” for projects that have become much larger initiatives and have improved public safety and the economic, environmental, and social conditions of coastal communities. The coastal program is a model for how a competitive small grants program can have an outsized impact. Examples highlighted in the findings include the revitalization of brownfields in the Menomonee Valley, Oak Creek, Racine, and Port Washington, and improving the safety for swimmers on the lakeshore and visitors to the Apostle Islands.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program’s initiative, leadership, and support led to the designation of the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Department of Administration, coastal program, and Department of Natural Resources to update the Memorandum of Understanding between the departments and as part of this effort identify shared coastal management priorities and opportunities.

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Coastal Hazards and Resilience

Overview

The coastal program provides leadership in addressing coastal hazards through expertise, the support of science, development of new policies and plans that incorporate the latest science, and building collaborations with communities; scientists; local, state, and federal agencies; and other stakeholders to address coastal hazards and public safety. The coastal program funded a

number of projects through its grants program. Examples of projects include funding and outreach for counties to conduct detailed shoreline analyses and refine policies for bluff setbacks; funding for evaluation of a large-scale shore protection system to better understand sediment transfer and impacts of a large-scale project on bluffs and beaches; and development of green infrastructure policies to reduce flooding. Stakeholders also praised the coastal program for its helpful technical assistance, providing “moral support” for challenging projects, connecting them with experts to address hazards issues, and identifying funding sources for their needs.

Collaborations

The coastal program has chaired the Wisconsin Coastal Hazards Working Group for nearly 20 years. Membership is broad and includes individuals from the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Emergency Management, University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Engineering and Department of Geology, Association of State Floodplain Managers, and Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department. The work group provides a venue for members to share information, coordinate efforts, and develop and implement technical studies and hazard projects.

The work group has been a catalyst for the development and implementation of a number of projects to address coastal hazards that have significant impacts for the built environment, communities, and public safety, a few of which are discussed in the findings. In addition, the work group has contributed to the state hazard mitigation plan and the Lake Michigan Coastal Bluffs Integrated Assessment, and assisted the coastal program with developing the 2016-2020 Section 309 Coastal Hazards strategy. The evaluation team heard from multiple stakeholders that they valued the efforts of the work group. The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for its leadership of the Wisconsin Coastal Hazards Working Group and successes in bringing together experts and stakeholders to address coastal hazards issues.

The coastal program co-led the establishment of the Wisconsin Coastal Beaches Working Group in 2014 with the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health Services, and University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute. The working group is co-chaired by the coastal program and serves the beach management community by facilitating information sharing, coordination and leveraging, stakeholder input, research guidance, and project prioritization. The work group provides guidance on research, management, and education on issues such as water quality, harmful algal blooms, beach hazards and dangerous currents, coastal storms, water level changes, erosion and sediment transport, and invasive species.

The coastal program assisted in establishing the Great Lakes Water Safety Consortium, and a staff member serves as a leadership council member. Coastal program staff members assisted in developing the consortium’s strategic plan and are currently assisting with the plan’s implementation. The consortium strives to address dangerous currents in the Great Lakes by increasing water safety literacy, growing awareness and understanding, collaborating on research and management, prioritizing resources and actions, and building on sustainability efforts.

Public Safety

Rip currents

The coastal program partnered with the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant and University of Wisconsin-Madison to raise awareness of the hazards posed by rip currents and provide the public with up-to-date information on beach conditions. From 2010 to 2017, over 600 people died from drowning in the Great Lakes. The partners received a NOAA Coastal Storms Program grant for the project: Development of an Observation, Forecasting, and Warning System for Rip Currents at Three Beaches in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Innovative, real-time rip current detection technology was piloted at several test beaches. Video imaging provides critical information to beach managers and swimmers about current swimming conditions and risk levels. University of Wisconsin Sea Grant and the coastal program received additional Coastal Storms Program funds to participate in a regional beach safety collaborative along with Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan and partners including NOAA's National Weather Service. The collaborative distributed beach safety and emergency rescue equipment—youth life jackets, throw rings, rescue boards, and warning signs—to local beaches around Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, and the Great Lakes. Partners worked to increase public awareness of how to recognize and respond to dangerous currents and waves at Great Lakes beaches. The collaborative used Great Lakes-specific social science research to create new, consistent messaging about dangerous currents and waves, such as the message, “When the Waves Are High, Stay Dry.”

Apostle Islands – Waves

The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore sea caves are a popular tourist destination drawing thousands of kayakers every summer. The sea caves can be treacherous because kayakers usually launch a mile-and-a-half away, and can't see conditions at the sea caves. Waves near the sea caves can be particularly dangerous because of the bowl-like rock cliffs that reflect and amplify waves.

The coastal program and Friends of the Apostle Islands provided financial support to University of Wisconsin Madison Civil and Environmental Engineering Department to improve kayaker safety at the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. A real-time wave observation system, including monitoring buoys and a digital camera, was installed in 2011 so that National Park Service staff members and kayakers could see real time wave conditions. The information is available on the web, and a kiosk displaying the information was installed at the launch site. University of Wisconsin Madison also provided public outreach and training of partners on the use of the system. Park staff members consider the system one of their most important educational and safety tools. The system was so effective that the park won the U.S. Department of Interior Safety Award.

In 2016, the coastal program and Friends of Apostle Islands provided funding for an upgrade of the technology to an autonomous real-time stereo imaging system to increase public safety. The improvements provide for year-round uninterrupted service and a much better picture of the actual wave and ice conditions. The information is available on the Integrated Nowcast and

Forecast Operation System. The project also links to work being done with the Coastal Beaches Working Group to increase safety messaging via social messaging. The project increases visitor safety and supports the local tourism economy. Project partners also include the National Park Service, Sea Grant, City of Bayfield, and various local outfitters.

Bluff Erosion

The erosion of coastal bluffs is a significant issue, and many local governments lack the capacity to address bluff erosion. The coastal program works with the Coastal Hazards Working Group partners to address bluff erosion issues, provide technical assistance to communities and property owners, and provide funding for projects to address bluff erosion on Wisconsin's coasts.

Oblique Photo, Shoreline Viewer

The coastal program provided technical and financial support for the development of an oblique photo and shoreline viewer. A series of projects resulted in a GIS database and map of Wisconsin's Great Lakes shorelines with geo-located photographs from the 1970s, 2007-08, and 2010s. The viewer allows for detailed analysis of changes to the shoreline in the past three decades. Several stakeholders noted the value to their work in making the historical and current photos available in a convenient format.

Bluff Stability

The coastal program also funded a project to use the oblique photos to investigate and map "hotspots" on part of Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coast. The Association for State Floodplain Managers worked with the University of Wisconsin-Madison to look at Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shoreline from the Illinois state line through Port Washington in Ozaukee County. High clay bluffs on the shoreline in the region are susceptible to erosion and recession. By examining corresponding oblique air photos from 1976 and 2007, bluff stability at each time was evaluated and segments were mapped as being unstable and failing, moderately unstable, or moderately stable. Although most of the bluffs were more stable in 2007 than in 1976, some parts were still failing in 2007 and were identified as "hotspots." The reasons for continued instability were investigated, and the study's results have led to a better understanding of coastal bluff recession and erosion and will be shared with local governments, planners, and regulators in the region.

Other coastal areas outside the Great Lakes region, such as California and Hawaii, are experiencing similar bluff erosion issues that threaten properties and contribute to marine debris issues in ocean waters and debris threatening public safety. The office encourages the coastal program to reach out to other areas with similar issues to discuss best practices. Wisconsin also does not have a bluff vegetation guide for its coast that could guide homeowners and other land managers with best practices for planting native vegetation and reducing erosion. The office encourages the coastal program to consider developing a bluff vegetation guide for the Wisconsin coast.

Coastal Process Manual Update

The coastal program and Wisconsin Sea Grant jointly developed and offer a one-year fellowship, the J. Philip Keillor Coastal Management Sea Grant Fellowship, aimed at tackling science and

policy challenges related to increasing coastal community resilience. At the time of the site visit, the first-ever recipient was updating the *Coastal Processes Manual* (1998), a well-used document written by Philip Keillor for estimating risk to coastal property on the Great Lakes. The fellow brought partners together, including the Coastal Hazards Working Group, to assist with updating the manual and worked with local governments to get feedback on how to design a manual that they could easily use. The updated manual will provide a needed resource for local officials and property owners to prepare for impacts of potential risk on their properties. The fellow also worked with Sea Grant to help draft an outreach document that describes actions that can be taken to address bluff recession.

LiDAR

In 2014, the coastal program worked with the Lake Superior counties of Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, and Iron; Lake Michigan counties of Manitowoc and Marinette; Bad River, Red Cliff, and Lac du Flambeau Tribes; Northwest Regional Planning Commission; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission; State Cartographer's Office; Sea Grant; Department of Natural Resources; NOAA Coastal Services Center; FEMA Region 5 Mitigation Division; and the National Park Service to help fill holes in the LiDAR data for coastal areas of the state. The coastal program led the effort to apply for a U.S. Geological Survey competitive grant to collect LiDAR data for several of the counties. In the 2015, the new Wisconsin geographic information officer successfully led the effort to secure funding for an additional seven counties. The LiDAR data will improve hydrology (flooding) and geomorphology (landslides/erosion) modeling and any recovery and rebuilding efforts. The Office for Coastal Management commends the Wisconsin Coastal Program for successfully obtain LiDAR data covering the coastal areas of the state that will inform the state's hazard mitigation efforts.

LiDAR only works well in non-turbid water, but a number of areas are turbid year-round. The office encourages the coastal program to identify innovative methods to gather data for areas such as Green Bay, St. Louis River, and others.

Legislative Changes

Since 1966, the state legislature has required that counties zone shorelands in accordance with minimum standards established by the Department of Natural Resources. Counties had the ability to grant variances where appropriate and could adopt standards that were more stringent. The department had the authority to review amendments and to appeal county decisions granting variances. In 2011, 2013, and 2015, the state legislature made statutory changes that limited the flexibility of the department and counties in how they administer the program. The biggest change related to coastal hazards is that counties are no longer allowed to create shoreland zoning ordinances that are more restrictive than state standards. All counties now use the state standard of 75-feet from the ordinary high water mark. The department also no longer has the authority to appeal county zoning decisions. Throughout much of the evaluation period, the coastal program worked with coastal counties to develop setback standards, informed by science, to lessen the risk of damage to property. With changes in state legislation, counties are no longer able to mitigate the coastal hazard bluff erosion through more restrictive shoreland zoning setbacks.

The coastal program is continuing to work with communities and other stakeholders to address coastal hazards. A recently formed community of practice is focused on using and developing mapping and digital tools to address coastal hazards. The coastal program obtained a NOAA Coastal Resilience Grant to support the work of the collaborative to identify opportunities for communities to enhance their resilience, particularly concerning flooding. The coastal program is well positioned to utilize existing collaborations to continue to work with local governments and community groups, educate citizens and decision makers, develop and implement new tools and methods, and develop plans and policies to reduce the risk of coastal hazards to public safety and property.

Findings for Coastal Hazards

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program's leadership in coastal hazards and the Coastal Hazards Working Group has brought together experts and stakeholders to enable local communities and the state to improve public safety. For example, the coastal program worked with partners and provided funding to develop new tools to monitor hazardous conditions and provide information, education, and equipment to improve public safety at public beaches and the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The Wisconsin Coastal Program also successfully applied for funding and worked with partners to obtain LiDAR data covering the coastal areas of the state that will inform the state's hazard mitigation efforts.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the coastal program to address coastal hazards by continuing to utilize existing partnerships to work with local governments and community groups; educating citizens and decision makers; developing and implementing new tools and methods; and developing plans and policies to reduce the risk of coastal hazards to public safety and property.

Economic Development, Social Justice, and Public Access

The coastal program provided grants and technical support to many projects over the evaluation period that have supported economic development, social justice, and public access. The coastal program has funded and supported a number of projects that have catalyzed much larger changes, including revitalization and redevelopment of brownfields that have engaged underrepresented communities and included significant public access and water quality components.

The coastal program funds projects annually according to identified priorities, such as public access and community planning. Working with underrepresented communities has not been an identified funding priority, but applicants have the opportunity to score bonus points for engaging underrepresented communities. Coastal program funds have been used to improve Great Lakes literacy and develop opportunities for workforce development in underrepresented communities, and staff continue to work with the Department of Public Instruction, Green Schools Consortium of Milwaukee and several non-profit organizations to identify opportunities.

The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for encouraging engagement with underrepresented communities in coastal management initiatives.

The coastal program is doing exceptional work to support the revitalization of abandoned industrial sites while incorporating public access and water quality, and engaging the different groups within a community. A few examples are highlighted in this section. The evaluation team heard from partners and saw opportunities to build on this work going forward. The coastal program has a unique niche with its expertise in public access, water quality, and land use planning and design. The coastal program can continue to look for outreach and education opportunities to communicate that degraded land use sites, once cleaned up and redeveloped, are desirable places to recreate, provide public access, and support coastal tourism and living wage jobs. The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Coastal Program and Wisconsin Coastal Council to share their expertise in catalyzing and participating in initiatives that improve public safety and the economic, environmental and social conditions of underserved communities with other state coastal management programs and interested entities.

Program partners also noted that the coastal program had opportunities to look beyond urban sites and explore rural opportunities to further coastal management, including food security issues. Partners suggested that the coastal program look at emerging industries for growth going forward, and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission was cited as a potential partner. The coastal program might also benefit from further leveraging social science and economic development expertise within Wisconsin state government to develop a strategic list of potential partners and projects that could be incorporated into the annual planning process. The coastal program also has mapping and data expertise that could provide a foundation for visualization and strategic planning regarding underserved coastal populations. The coastal program can also benefit from continuing to capitalize on their ability to seek out and work with nontraditional partners, such as 16th Street Community Health Center, and engage people who haven't participated in coastal management activities before.

Menomonee Valley

Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley is four miles long and a half-mile wide and was once the "Machine Shop of the World." After these industries declined, the area was abandoned and unusable, creating a barrier to the city's south side and leaving the Menomonee River unappreciated and misused. The coastal program was one of the early believers in the area's potential and funded an initial project to address stormwater and sustainability. The coastal program has continued to invest in the area over the past 15 years, and along with the efforts of many partners the area has seen a renewal with new sustainable business standards that call for living wage jobs, open space and green infrastructure, public access amenities, new businesses moving in, and a connection with communities across the river.

The coastal program provided financial and technical assistance to the Menomonee Valley renewal through a number of projects:

- The design of Three Bridges, a 23-acre park along a 2,600-foot stretch of the river as part of a larger effort to redevelop the 140-acre former rail yard. The project opened an area along the river to the public for the first time since 1879. The development of Three Bridges Park was part of a comprehensive effort to improve job accessibility, science education, environmental and public health, and neighborhood vitality. The project included a new walking bridge that reconnected communities that had been separated for more than a generation. The bridge allows a low-income neighborhood across the river easy access to new living-wage jobs in Menomonee Valley.
- A public river walkway along the Menomonee River that bridges gaps and completes the Hank Aaron State Trail from Miller Park to the Lakeshore. The walkway is part of the Reed Street Yards project, a 15-acre redevelopment focusing on water-related industries and public facilities (University of Wisconsin School of Freshwater Science) along the river.
- Stormwater Park is a 70-acre park designed and developed with coastal program funds. The open space provides for recreation, interpretation, and primary treatment of stormwater within the developing business park.
- For the Ember Lane project, the coastal program provided funding for construction of a floating dock and debris screen on the Menomonee River at a site susceptible to sediment and litter pollution.

The Menomonee Valley renewal also provided the coastal program with the opportunity to participate in new innovative partnerships with organizations such as 16th Street Community Health Center and Urban Ecology Center. A Federally Qualified Health Center, 16th Street has had an environmental health component for the past 20 years and has worked to address economic opportunities, healthy environments, and community and cultural connections. The health clinic is currently conducting a benchmarking report in the valley to look at health impacts of environmental contamination before and after revitalization. The Urban Ecology Center moved into a vacant bar and now provides ongoing educational and employment opportunities for neighborhood children. For a nominal membership fee, people in the neighborhood can access multiple types of recreation gear, such as kayaks, to participate in nature-based activities. A coastal program grant provided the center with funding for local children to participate in field trips.

The changes in the Menomonee Valley were cited by evaluation participants as inspiration to pursue other renewal projects, and Menomonee Valley has been cited as an example of successful economic renewal and environmental success by the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and others.

Oak Creek Redevelopment

For 80 years, the City of Oak Creek's Lake Michigan waterfront supported heavy industry and prosperity for the region but closed off the lakefront from residents who did not work at the factories. With the loss of manufacturing jobs in the 1980s and 1990s, Oak Creek's industrial waterfront was abandoned, leaving the land polluted and unusable. Oak Creek, a city of 35,000, now had the largest section of undeveloped waterfront in Southeast Wisconsin.

In 2011, the coastal program provided funding to the city to develop the Lakefront Redevelopment Action Plan with significant community input. Through this effort, partners worked to change the image of the area, and the community is excited about the new park. The plan is a roadmap for the area that created a clear vision, making it easier for the city to obtain additional funding to revitalize the area. Funding includes federal and state grants to undertake major infrastructure improvements, including an extension of Highway 100 to serve as the southern gateway into the area.

The revitalization of the former brownfield is anticipated to bring many new jobs to the city while providing ecological benefits and public access to Lake Michigan. The city is leveraging the redevelopment of the brownfield to create a comprehensive green infrastructure system. Environmental remediation of the bluffs will restore land- and water-based native ecological communities and improve the quality of water entering Lake Michigan. The coastal program's 306A funding supported the development of trails and other public access amenities along with habitat restoration to improve water quality on a 98-acre Lake Vista Park portion of the site. The new public access site opened to the public in the summer of 2018. Some areas of the site will be redeveloped as residential, retail, office and light industrial areas, bringing new jobs to the city.

Harbor and Port Planning

The coastal program works with ports and harbor districts to help them plan for the next century, while also addressing public access, stormwater management, and habitat restoration. The coastal program, along with other partners, provided funding to support the Commercial Ports Development Initiative. The Wisconsin Commercial Ports Association, multiple state agencies, and university and county partners worked to support freight and economic development at Wisconsin ports. As part of the initiative, partners conducted a port infrastructure inventory, a Wisconsin marine commodity market analysis, and an analysis of port planning and the Wisconsin Harbor Assistance Program, and developed a Wisconsin commercial ports master plan with strategic initiatives to promote domestic and international shipping. In addition, data were gathered to be used as baselines for future metrics.

In 2016, the coastal program funded a waterway plan for Milwaukee's Harbor District, located in a low-income area of the city. The planning process included broad outreach to and input from stakeholders, including the local community through the 16th Street Community Health Center, assessment of current conditions, and a market analysis. The stakeholders looked to Menomonee Valley as an example of what could be done to revitalize a brownfield. The plan will guide the revitalization of the Harbor District.

Racine's Root River

Racine was an industrial city, with the Root River hidden behind warehouses and industrial buildings. With economic change, Root River manufacturing became marinas, residences, and retail, but the area struggled. In 2006, the Root River Council began a conversation among community members concerned about the Root River. The coastal program provided seed money

to take these initial conversations further and provided funding for community workshops, which were compiled into *Back to the Root: An Urban River Revitalization Plan*. The community called for creating a sense of place, stimulating economic growth, improving water quality, and providing for public access.

In 2012, the coastal program funded the *RootWorks Comprehensive Plan*. Community meetings and stakeholder interviews were conducted. The plan developed site standards for redevelopment and established 47 projects to achieve the river's renewal. The city adopted the plan and changed zoning ordinances to reflect its vision. Since the plan, the city has received over \$10 million in tax credits and funding for the area's redevelopment, and developers now approach the city.

In 2013, the coastal program funded the *West Bluff Overlook* design for a bike path and outdoor classroom. Land donated by the S.C. Johnson Company was matched by Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for land acquisition, and funds were leveraged from the Fund for Lake Michigan. Other partners included the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Business Improvement District Downtown Racine, Wild Ones, Watershed Initiative Network Root-Pike, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Olympia Brown Unitarian Church, Racine Community Foundation, and the City of Racine.

Port Washington

The historic City of Port Washington is a popular tourist destination for hikers, bikers, bird-watchers, sailors, beach-goers, and tourists. The coastal program supported the city's efforts to create Coal Dock Park, adjacent to the picturesque downtown and marina, which provides the public with recreational trails with connections to other trails in the city, fishing areas, docking for ships including visiting tall ships, a launching area for non-motorized small craft, and a naturalized area that provides a stopover point for migratory birds. The park is now enjoyed by both tourists and the community.

The old coal docks were located on a 20-acre fill site on the Lake Michigan shoreline. In 2008, a coastal program grant funded the hiring of planners, landscape architects, and engineers to move forward with ideas gathered by a citizens' committee for reuse of the site. The coastal program also supported the construction of the site and funded the walkway. The mayor of the city stated that the coastal program's support was essential in making the creation of Coal Dock Park happen.

Clean Marinas

The coastal program was a partner in the creation of the Wisconsin Marine Association and through the association helped fund and support the creation of the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program. The Clean Marina Program is co-led by the coastal program, the Wisconsin Marine Association and the Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute. The coastal program participates on the steering committee and technical team and assists with planning, marina assessments, and outreach. Some financial assistance is provided to certify and recertify marinas. Wisconsin now

has 22 Clean Marinas, which are a good marketing tool to draw boaters to Wisconsin and increase pride of place. The program has served as a model for other Great Lakes states, including Illinois and Minnesota.

The coastal program is also a member of the Great Lakes Clean Marina Network. The coastal program provides technical assistance on developing clean marina tools like the Great Lakes Clean Marina Best Management Practices Guide, an online classroom that can be utilized region-wide, and implementation of a NOAA Coastal Storms Program funded project to assist marinas with becoming more resilient.

Water Quality of Coastal Beaches

Coastal beaches with good water quality provide recreational opportunities for residents and tourists and support local economies. To ensure good water quality, the coastal program has worked with communities to identify pollution sources, sample water quality, conduct sanitary surveys, and develop and implement beach redesign plans that include green infrastructure. Beach redesign plans, funded by the coastal program, have been implemented in the Cities of Racine, Sturgeon Bay, and Washburn; Village of Egg Harbor; and Town of Ellison Bay. This process has led to other coastal beaches in Wisconsin being mitigated with funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Fund for Lake Michigan as well. Beaches that have been redesigned to improve water quality have seen substantial increases in usage.

The coastal program has also provided financial support and worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to improve water quality monitoring while keeping costs down. Wisconsin was the first in the U.S. to use qPCR testing to monitor *E. coli* levels, enabling beach managers to make same-day decisions, unlike culture-based monitoring approaches, which provide next day results. The coastal program has worked with the U.S. Geological Survey, Department of Natural Resources, Sea Grant, and Department of Health Services to implement and support education, training, and enhancements to build sustainability of affordable water quality nowcast operations at the state and local levels. The coastal program funded research to develop a user-friendly decision-support tool that enables users with limited resources and technical expertise to predict *E. coli* levels in coastal streams and adjacent beaches in real time.

G-WOW Education Model

The coastal program supported the development of the Ojibwe's unique G-WOW education model through several projects. The education model is based on investigating how climate change is affecting valued cultural practices and affecting sustainability of species and habitat conditions that support those practices. The model integrates scientific research with real world "place-based" evidence that can be observed and experienced. The coastal program supported the development of the Changing Climate, Changing Culture Discovery Center, which explores the impacts of climate change on Ojibwe wild rice harvesting and other coastal resources using the G-WOW model. The center has approximately 33,000 visitors a year and is a focal point for local school and teacher climate-change education programs.

The coastal program also supported the development of G-WOW curriculum for middle school to adult learners, available on the G-WOW website, and supported a teacher development institute to build capacity for teaching climate change using the model. The model received a 2012 Honor Award by the Eastern Region of the U.S. Forest Service. The model has also been adopted by others. In 2013, the G-WOW curriculum was incorporated into climate change kiosks at the Aldo Leopold Nature Center in Monona, Wisconsin. In 2014, the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Duluth received a \$1.09 million NASA Innovations in Climate Change-Tribal grant that uses the G-WOW model to increase climate literacy through the Ojibwe ceded territories in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

The coastal program serves as the lead for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, coordinating with local governments, and land trusts, and the Department of Natural Resources to identify and prioritize land conservation projects to be submitted to the national competition. The coastal program also administered the \$5.5 million in funding for the five Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program projects in the state since 2008. The projects have resulted in the protection of over 4,500 acres of coastal habitat. In addition to protecting coastal habitat, projects have increased public access to the Great Lakes and have helped to protect significant cultural resources. The coastal program continues to administer several Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and Area of Concern land acquisition projects supported through Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding. The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for its work with partners to identify and acquire priority parcels for habitat protection and public access.

In 2011, the coastal program partnered with the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior to protect 89 acres along the Lake Superior shoreline within the Red Cliff Reservation. The land is part of the nation's first tribal national park and is open to the public as well as tribal members. The Frog Bay Tribal National Park acquisition has allowed the Red Cliff community to retrieve a rich part of its history and preserve cultural traditions. The Frog Bay Tribal National Park project was featured in a video developed by the Healing Our Waters Coalition.

Other projects completed since 2008:

- **Lost Creek** in Bayfield County protects approximately 359 acres of forest and forested wetlands within and adjacent to Lost Creek Bog State Natural Area.
- **Woodstock Bay** in Douglas County protects over 14 acres adjacent to the Superior Municipal Forest and provides access to the St. Louis River and Lake Superior Water Trail. The site is an important migratory stopover for birds.
- **Nemadji River** in Douglas County protects nearly 4,000 acres that are critical to maintaining water quality in the Lake Superior wetlands downstream, and the project safeguards habitat for a number of wildlife species, including the gray wolf.
- **Houghton Falls** protects 76 acres in the Town of Bayfield, including more than 2,200 feet of Lake Superior shoreline and a sandstone gorge that drains into a cove. The site is

managed as a state natural area, providing public access for recreational activities such as hiking and bird watching.

- **Mashek Creek** protects 25 acres and 1,400 feet of frontage along both banks of the creek. The site, managed by the Department of Natural Resources, protects a natural-reproduction trout and salmon stream, and provides the only public access along Lake Michigan in Kewaunee County apart from parkland in the Cities of Algoma and Kewaunee.

Findings for Economics, Social Justice, and Public Access

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program has sought out and engaged underserved coastal communities in initiatives to improve coastal management. Examples highlighted in the findings include Menomonee Valley, Oak Creek, Racine’s Root River, and the G-WOW education model.

Accomplishment: The Wisconsin Coastal Program has provided technical and financial support to communities to ensure that water quality and public access are part of brownfield revitalization initiatives.

Accomplishment: The Office for Coastal Management commends the coastal program for its work with partners to identify and acquire priority parcels for habitat protection and public access.

Recommendation: The Office for Coastal Management encourages the Wisconsin Coastal Program and Wisconsin Coastal Council to share their expertise in catalyzing and participating in initiatives that improve public safety and the economic, environmental and social conditions of underserved communities with other state coastal management programs and interested entities.

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: Ensuring improved public access to coastal water resources

Objective: By 2017, enhance 12 existing public access sites to provide recreational opportunities for Wisconsin residents and visitors.

Strategy: Wisconsin's shoreline is increasingly used for recreation at unprecedented levels due to the close proximity of population centers and to overcrowding of some inland lakes. Anecdotally, the demand for public access to the coastal waters has outstripped the supply, especially in urban areas, and there is a need for expanded and improved recreational facilities and services. WCMP works to provide increased opportunities for public access, taking into account current and future public access needs, to coastal areas of recreational, historical, aesthetic, ecological, or cultural value. For this metric, the definitions of public access sites and enhancements are the same as those under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) 2011 Performance Measurement System Guidance. Enhancements will be targeted to existing coastal zone public access sites.

Performance Measure: By 2017, number of enhancements begun in 2012 or later completed at existing public access sites with financial assistance from the WCMP.

Target: By 2017, 12 enhancements begun in 2012 or later completed at existing public access sites with financial assistance from the WCMP.

First Year Results: 2 public access site enhancements

Second Year Results: 3 public access site enhancements

Third Year Results: 4 public access site enhancements

Fourth Year Results: 4 public access site enhancements

Fifth Year Results: 2 public access site enhancements

Five Year Total: 15 public access site enhancements

Discussion: The coastal program exceeded its goal of 12 public access enhancements. The coastal program's public access projects have included a number of projects that have supported the revitalization of communities and enhanced water quality.

METRIC 2

Goal: Enhance water quality at coastal marinas

Objective: By 2017, certify 5 marinas through the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program in order to maintain or improve water quality and habitat at marinas.

Strategy: Marinas and recreational boating are increasingly popular uses of Wisconsin’s coastal areas and are important examples of public access to coastal waterways. However, when marinas are poorly designed or managed, they may pose a threat to the health of aquatic systems and may pose other environmental hazards and public health problems. Nonpoint pollution can be impacted by addressing water quality at new and existing marinas through the use of best management practices as exemplified in the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program. WCMP will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program for the next five years. Certified marinas in Wisconsin, including dates of certification, can be found at www.wisconsincleanmarina.org.

Performance Measure: Between 2012 and 2017, number of Wisconsin marinas certified as Clean Marinas through the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program with financial and technical assistance from WCMP.

Target: Between 2012 and 2017, 5 Wisconsin marinas certified as Clean Marinas through the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program with financial and technical assistance from WCMP.

First Year Results: 0 Clean Marinas certified
Second Year Results: 2 Clean Marinas certified
Third Year Results: 0 Clean Marinas certified
Fourth Year Results: 0 Clean Marinas certified
Fifth Year Results: 1 Clean Marinas certified

Five Year Total: 3 Clean Marinas certified

Discussion: The coastal program did not meet its goal, but there are 4 marinas that are close to certification and another 10 that have pledged to become Clean Marinas. The coastal program and the University of Wisconsin-Sea Grant continue to provide technical assistance to the Wisconsin Clean Marina Program and to the program’s managing entity, the Wisconsin Marine Association.

METRIC 3

Goal: Improved coastal community planning

Objective: By 2017, develop, update, or implement five coastal community plans that promote the orderly and balanced development of coastal communities, giving full consideration to economic, ecological, human resource, cultural, historic, recreational, and aesthetic values, and existing and future needs.

Strategy: WCMP continues to play an integral role in guiding state and local planning efforts in the coastal zone. In working with state and local governments on coastal community planning and development, WCMP actively promotes the orderly and balanced development of coastal communities, giving full consideration to economic, ecological, human resource, cultural, historic, recreational, and aesthetic values, and existing and future needs. For this metric, the definitions of plans and coastal communities are the same as those under the CZMA 2011 Performance Measurement System Guidance.

Performance Measure: By 2017, number of distinct coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented with financial assistance from the WCMP.

Target: By 2017, 5 distinct coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented with financial assistance from the WCMP.

First Year Results: 3 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Second Year Results: 3 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Third Year Results: 2 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Fourth Year Results: 2 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Fifth Year Results: 1 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Five Year Total: 11 coastal community plans developed, updated, or implemented

Discussion: The coastal program doubled its initial target. The coastal program was particularly commended by its partners for its financial and technical support of planning, since few funding sources will support this important first step to getting projects and initiatives underway.

Conclusion

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

These evaluation findings contain six recommendations that must be considered before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation but which 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 Wisconsin 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 Jeffrey L. Payne _____
Jeffrey L. Payne, PhD
Director, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

dated December 22, 2018 _____
Date

Appendix A: Response to Written Comments

No written comments were received.