

Public Comments sought on Draft Section 309 Assessment and Strategy 2011-2015

The Draft Section 309 Assessment and Strategy 2011-2015 is now online and available for public review and comment. This document provides background on the Section 309 program and a summary of the 2011 Assessment and Strategy document

Section 309 Coastal Zone Enhancement Program

The federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), in Section 309, provides special funding to assist states enrolled in the national program to develop or implement changes to their federally-approved state Coastal Zone Management Programs. The following requirements apply only to this particular portion of the CZMA:

- Congress identified nine coastal management issues (called “enhancement areas”) for states to evaluate and assess the need for program changes to address. The nine issues are: public access, coastal hazards, ocean resources, wetlands, cumulative and secondary impacts of growth, marine debris, special area management planning, energy and government facility siting, and aquaculture.
- Program changes are defined by Congress as being "new or amended laws, regulations, or enforceable policies." Grant funds may not be used to implement existing laws or regulations or to fund existing initiatives unless they result in program changes.
- Congress requires states to periodically assess the status of the nine enhancement areas, identify high priorities for improvement, and propose strategies for achieving those improvements. These Assessment and Strategy documents are subject to public review and comment, and to federal approval.

Summary of Assessment and Strategy Document

Ecology has assessed the resource and management status of the nine coastal “enhancement areas,” and assigned the following priority rankings to each enhancement area:

- Wetlands – medium
- Coastal Hazards – medium

- Public Access – medium
- Marine Debris – low
- Cumulative and Secondary Impacts – high
- Special Area Management Planning – low
- Ocean Resources – high
- Energy and Government Facility Siting – medium
- Aquaculture – medium

It is important to note that the priorities listed above reflect the state's assessment of where CZM program changes (see above) are needed – not on the issue overall. For example, wetlands protection continues to be a high priority for the state. However, we are proposing a medium priority for wetlands the next 5 years of Section 309 funding with regards to the need for formal changes in law or policy.

Ecology developed two strategies for the 2011-2015 assessment and strategy cycle, focusing on cumulative and secondary impacts of growth and ocean resources. These strategies also address other issue areas, such as coastal hazards and aquaculture, as part of their execution. The cumulative and secondary impacts of growth strategy centers on working with local governments to assist them in updating their Shoreline Master Programs. The ocean resources strategy will involve the development of a comprehensive marine spatial plan for Washington's marine waters.

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