

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

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### Statement/Testimony

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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE JIM SAXTON, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS, AT THE HEARING ON THE COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT: FEB. 25, 1999.

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Enacted by Congress in 1972, CZMA provides grants to states that voluntarily develop and implement Federally-approved coastal zone management plans. It also allows states with approved plans the right to review Federal actions to ensure they are consistent with those plans, and it authorizes the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

I am a sailor, and protection of the fragile coastal ecosystem has been a priority of mine. The Barnegat Bay watershed includes portions of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, which provides nesting habitat for migratory birds along the Atlantic Flyway. Threats to these creatures necessarily should be addressed within the context of CZMA. One such threat is the use of personal watercraft, also known as jet-skis or PWCs, in shallow water.

The environmental impacts of PWCs are often cited as the following:

- 1) Wildlife Disturbance: PWCs shallow draft and high maneuverability are not present in larger boats, and allow PWCs to enter sensitive areas not accessible to larger motorized boats. Once there, they disturb nesting birds and wildlife. Some studies indicate that when startled by PWCs, nesting birds have trampled their eggs, seals have abandoned their pups, and other marine mammals have avoided certain areas.
- 2) Destruction of Aquatic Vegetation: Again, because PWCs are able to enter shallow water, they have the ability to uproot aquatic plants and disturb kelp beds.
- 3) Increased Erosion: PWC users typically spend longer periods of time in an area than traditional boats and can generate significant wave action. Increased and continuous wave action contributes to shoreline erosion.

The Subcommittee is preparing legislation to encourage states to address the impacts of personal watercraft on the marine environment through state coastal zone management plans.

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