

# **Committee on Resources,**

## **Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans**

[fisheries](#) - - Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6232 - - (202) 226-0200

---

### **Witness Statement**

---

**TESTIMONY OF  
DR. WILLIAM J. MERRELL  
PRESIDENT OF THE H. JOHN HEINZ III CENTER FOR  
SCIENCE, ECONOMICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MAY 24, 2001**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I am William Merrell, President of The H. John Heinz III Center for Science, Economics and the Environment. While serving as president of The Heinz Center, I am on leave of absence from the Texas A&M University, where I am professor of oceanography and marine sciences. I am pleased to testify on the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). My testimony will include brief comments on the CZMA and will focus specifically on a Heinz Center study on coastal management performance indicators and measures that would complement the implementation of the proposed performance evaluation system in H.R. 897.

We all recognize the importance of our coastal areas to the economic vitality and biological diversity of the United States. Marine-related economic activities in the coastal zone and coastal ocean account for some 2 percent of the U.S. Gross National Product and are comparable in scope to other important sectors of our economy. At the same time, our coastal areas are under considerable pressures. Population growth and its associated impacts may be the most critical issue. About half the nation's population now lives in the narrow fringe of coastal counties, and by 2015, projections suggest that the coastal population will number 155 million. Coastal communities need support to plan for and manage growth and development in their coastal areas, and the Coastal Zone Management Act enhances and encourages proactive coastal zone management.

Since 1972, when Congress enacted the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Act has provided a national framework for improved management of the coastal lands and waters of the nation's coastal zone. The Act's origins can be traced to the recommendations of the Stratton Commission in its final report, *Our Nation and the Sea*, that explicitly urged the passage of federal coastal zone management legislation to assist the states in managing coastal resources and to require federal programs and activities to conform to state coastal policies. The major features of the 1972 Act are still in effect: The states have the lead in developing plans; the program is voluntary, with no sanctions imposed on states choosing not to prepare CZM programs; federal grants aid state governments in developing and implementing plans; and federal agencies must assist states in the CZM process. Coastal zone management programs and activities involve all levels of government--federal, state and local--and that three-tier system is a stable element of this voluntary program.

The CZM program has been very effective in diffusing coastal zone management practices to practically all the U.S. coastal zone in the coastal states and territories. After 30 years, 33 of 35 eligible coastal states, commonwealths, and territories participate in this voluntary program (only Indiana, which is presently developing a program and Illinois do not participate). The network these 33 states have established for implementing coastal programs is extensive, spreading coastal zone management considerations widely within the state and local governance structure. More than 97 percent of the U.S. shoreline is now subject to CZM programs, and no state or territory has dropped out of the program in its three decades of operation. CZMA stimulated coastal management actions in the states and territories, where, in most cases, none had existed before.

Even after 30 years of success, CZMA must be seen in a larger context. Are the nation's environmental programs working? Are we getting the benefits from them that our time and effort should bring? These questions are being asked by program managers, legislatures, and the public, and the answers are not clear.

Quantitative evaluation of the impacts of the CZM program is difficult at best, and relatively little information of this kind now exists. Most assessments to date have involved the use of process indicators (number of new state laws and regulations, strength of enforcement, better mapping, and so on), and not indicators of program performance. Developing a set of on-the-ground measures and indicators is a high priority at all levels of government.

To effectively and efficiently protect and improve the management of coastal resources, coastal managers must be able to assess the performance of their programs. Such performance measures will enable managers to monitor the success of implemented management strategies. To meet this need, The Heinz Center, working collaboratively with NOAA's National Ocean Service, will convene a panel of experts from the four sectors--government (all levels), industry, academia, and environmental organizations--to develop a common framework and a consistent set of measures, or performance indicators, to evaluate the effectiveness of state coastal zone management programs in achieving the objectives specified in the Coastal Zone Management Act. This framework will provide information on regional and national trends or issues affecting the coast, will assist coastal managers to improve internal management of their programs, and will showcase accomplishments and potential needs of specific state programs. In addition, such a framework and suite of indicators will provide a mechanism for coastal decision makers to assess program effectiveness in achieving desired goals, to make policy adjustments, and to allocate or reallocate resources. The panel will also consider the role of the National Estuarine Research Reserves, as specified in Section 315 of the 1972 Act, in developing performance measures and indicators.

The Heinz Center will review the issues being addressed by state coastal programs and the current use of performance indicators and measures. Regional multisector roundtables will be held in California, Texas, and the Great Lakes area (possibly Michigan), to gather public input on the need and value of such an evaluation strategy.

The Heinz Center study will identify common goals and threads among the state coastal programs that can serve as a framework of performance measures and indicators to measure the health of the natural, cultural and economic resources of our nation's coast. This framework must be flexible enough to allow the states to continue to develop measures and indicators that are specific to their individual programs. This framework will enhance the effective partnership between the states and the federal government that exists through the CZMA and at the same time will provide a wealth of information on our Nation's coastal resources and their management.

I believe that The Heinz Center's Coastal Management Performance Measures and Indicators Study will enhance the effectiveness of the Act in protecting and managing the nation's coastal resources. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to your deliberations on the reauthorization of this important Act.

# # #