INVESTING IN FLORIDA'S COASTAL &

OCEANS FUTURE

Introduction

Florida is the only continental state largely surrounded by coastal seas and oceans. Our waters define our borders and our quality of life. Now, more than ever before, Floridians recognize how individual and regional decisions can impact the oceans as a whole. By sharing our collective resources - the best available science, the expertise of hundreds of scientists and resource managers and our collective commitment – we can better protect the health of our complex ecosystems and secure an underwater legacy for future generations.

Florida's economy and population are growing daily. Protecting Florida's marine resources, today and tomorrow, requires accurate assessment, continuous monitoring and real-time ability to predict changes to the physical, chemical, biological, geological and socioeconomic components of our marine ecosystems. It also requires a fully-integrated information handling system to allow resource managers to use current and future data in decision making.

Florida's economy is heavily dependent on its oceans and shoreline:

- Florida's shoreline Gross State Product (GSP) is more than $402 billion, two and a half times the nearly $160 billion of its' inland economy.
- Ocean tourism and recreation for the next decade is projected to grow by 73 percent, creating more than 268,000 new jobs.
- Florida's coastal counties increased employment by 31 percent, wages by 48 percent and the GSP by 63 percent.
- Florida's GSP for transportation and recreation is one of the top five in the nation, a significant influence on the ocean economy.

Florida's recreational and commercial fishing industries inject more than $8 billion into local communities around the state.

The Future...

Florida's goal is to conserve our ocean and coastal resources while generating economic benefits from their use. Achieving success relies on using creative public and private partnerships, pursuing opportunities to leverage funds, involving our universities and research laboratories and coordinating our efforts with local, state and federal agencies.

Water Quality

With an economy driven by our environment, maintaining water quality to support coral reefs, grass beds, fishing and beach activities must be a high priority.

Water Quality Research Priorities:

1. Real-time statewide data that guides water quality management, navigation and hazard response, and marine resource management.
2. Monitoring that relates nutrients and living resources to human activities, provides cost effective resource management programs to improve water quality and protect human health.
3. Harmful algal bloom research to protect tourism, commercial and recreational fisheries and inform watershed management for betterocean health.

Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Florida's beaches and near shore coastal waters draw more than 33 million tourists to Florida each year, contributing more than $56 billion and more than 900,000 jobs to the economy. Having a comprehensive understanding of our marine ecosystem through the use of reliable baseline information is critical to supporting management decisions.

Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems Research Priorities:

1. Map and characterize the seafloor and coast including the distribution and abundance patterns of coastal marine organisms.
2. Measure natural and manmade habitat loss and associated economic impacts.
3. Understand linkages between ocean and coastal habitats and the living marine resources that they support.
4. Evaluate, improve and implement effective strategies for protecting and restoring ocean and coastal habitats.

The mangrove community plays an important role in Florida's ecosystem, serving as feeding, breeding, and nursery grounds for a variety of fish, birds and other wildlife.
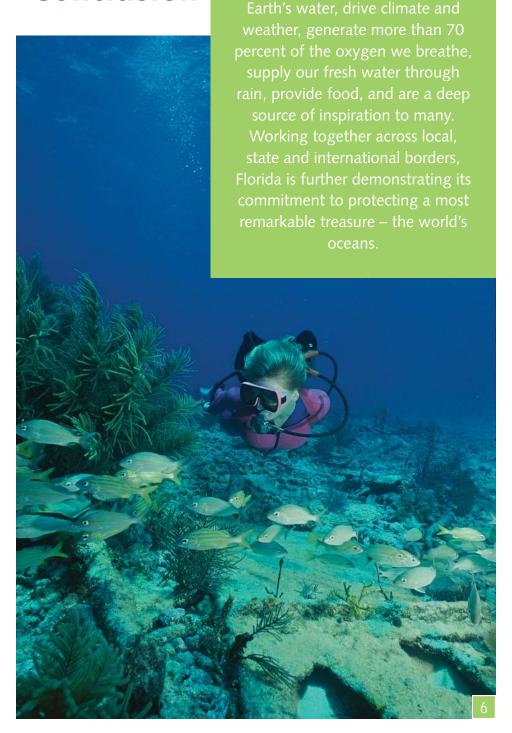
Tools and Technology

Fulfilling Florida's need to observe and predict environmental change and the response of its coastal waters will require two components.

Tools and Technology Research Priorities:

1. Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems: a mix of in-water platforms and buoys, shipboard surveys and remote sensing is required for continuous monitoring of water quality and status of marine resources. The goal is to create an interdisciplinary observing system that spans from the outer shelf to coastal estuaries and rivers.

2. Integrated Data Management and Prediction: coordinated collection, handling, quality control, sharing and interpretation of research and monitoring data are critical to improving the state's resource management. Centralized coordination of model development to provide prediction, web distribution of predictions and real-time web-based information are needed to accommodate management decisions.

Florida is the only state mostly surrounded by two oceans -- the sparkling turquoise waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the deep azure waters of the Atlantic Ocean, home to the third largest coral reef system in the world.

Conclusion

Our oceans hold 97 percent of the Earth's water, drive climate and weather, generate more than 70 percent of the oxygen we breathe, supply our fresh water through rain, provide food, and are a deep source of inspiration to many. Working together across local, state and international borders, Florida is further demonstrating its commitment to protecting a most remarkable treasure – the world's oceans.

FLORIDA OCEANS & COASTAL RESOURCES COUNCIL

The Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources Council envisions the bountiful ocean and coastal resources of Florida as a perpetual life-support system and the foundation of our economy and society.

The Council will promote innovative research and the use of scientific results to guide management and stewardship of Florida's ocean and coastal resources for future generations.

The Council will support the enhancement of Florida's academic and marine research institutions into an integrated network, cooperating and partnering with public agencies, industries, environmental organizations and citizens.

Florida will be an internationally-recognized leader in marine science and ecosystem-based management.