

CALIFORNIA COASTAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN PROJECT

*A collaborative effort led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers South Pacific Division
and the California Resources Agency*

OVERVIEW

CALIFORNIA COASTAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN

The Problem

California's beaches, sea cliffs, wetlands, watersheds, harbors and nearshore ocean environment – our precious coastal resources – are experiencing continuing and increasing degradation.

Serious beach erosion - caused by a lack of sandy sediment sources - reduces recreational opportunities in many coastal areas and hurts the state's economy through a negative effect on tourism. Narrow beaches also mean higher cliff erosion rates, increased storm damage to coastal development (much of it public infrastructure), and restricted coastal access.

On the other hand, the environmental diversity and productivity of our watersheds, wetlands and harbors has been compromised by too much sedimentation. The growth and development of California over the past century has increased sediment loads in streams and rivers, while reducing the flow of water to flush them downstream to the ocean. Our management of water for urban uses and flood control, primarily through dam building, has reduced the flow of water by ½ or more in many watersheds.

Efforts to address these problems require a comprehensive database, sophisticated technical and environmental analyses, and extensive coordination among local interests and state and federal regulatory agencies. These important steps in project development, together with the significant costs typically associated with solving coastal sediment problems, create a real challenge for pro-active coastal stewardship.

Why a California Coastal Sediment Management Master Plan ?

All of these problems are connected. The unintended consequences of the state's explosive growth and water supply management to support that growth have resulted in too much sediment in some places (wetlands, watersheds and harbors) and not enough in other places (beaches). In the past, these related problems have usually been addressed on a site and project specific basis.

An innovative collaboration between the Resources Agency of the State of California and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is under way to change this piecemeal response to one that is integrated on a regional, system-wide basis. The objective is to combine state, federal, local and regional resources to manage sediment in the most efficient way to achieve the most environmental and economic benefits for California. This effort is the California Coastal Sediment Management Master Plan (Sediment Master Plan or “SMP”) process.

Who is Involved ?

The Coastal Sediment Management Workgroup, involving a number of state and federal agencies with coastal management responsibilities, has obtained funds for and will guide the development of the SMP. Some of the basic preparatory and information-base work to support the SMP is already underway. The State Department of Boating and Waterways and the California Geological Survey are providing project management services. Other key participants are: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco; the California Coastal Commission, Coastal Conservancy, and the State Lands Commission; the California Departments of Parks and Recreation, Transportation, and Fish and Game; the federal Minerals Management Service; and the California Coastal Coalition, representing local and regional governments.

The work started in 2003. It is anticipated that state and federal support for the SMP effort will span several years and total several million dollars. Local coastal interest groups, coastal communities, and regional entities from around the state must be involved in this cooperative effort in order to make it effective and successful. Therefore, a series of public workshops is getting underway during the winter and spring of 2004 to initiate widespread public participation.

The intent of the SMP Workshops is to establish an ongoing partnership among local and regional coastal groups and the involved state and federal agencies. It is anticipated that this partnership will continue throughout the development of the SMP and carry over to implementation actions that come about as a result of the Sediment Master Plan.

Key Features of the SMP

- This program will provide an inventory of existing sediment management activities and a strategic vision of the overall coastal sediment management needs in California. It will identify distinct regions within the state for evaluation, and identify specific locations within each region with high priority sediment management needs. The penultimate goal for the SMP is the development of an implementation strategy for regional sediment management in California.
- The SMP will focus on the state’s coastline, coastal watersheds and nearshore ocean area in order to provide a comprehensive, system-wide overview of regional sediment management issues and needs. Beach and coastal cliff erosion, habitat diversity, water quality, wetland sedimentation, water supply, and

navigation are all critical management issues that must be addressed in an integrated manner. An integrated management framework will lead to effective and efficient programs and projects, lend strong support to attract funding, and ensure that negative unintended impacts are minimized.

- The SMP program will include a number of specific studies to support regional sediment management strategies. Examples are: an economic cost – benefit assessment of various sediment management actions; evaluation of regulatory and permitting issues and identification of potential improvements and streamlining options; and technical studies designed to evaluate the impact that fine-grained materials have on our natural resources.
- The SMP program will identify, evaluate and prioritize sediment management approaches using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. The GIS approach will allow the effective synthesis of information from many historical and current studies and projects to address multiple sediment management objectives. Public access to the GIS through the internet will be an important aspect of this part of the work.
- The SMP will provide the basis for a new era of coastal policy and action for California. It will empower coastal constituencies in carrying out the critical sediment management programs and projects that will preserve and enhance our coastal resources and support California’s environment and economy.

How to Participate

If you have an interest in the future of California’s coastline, your participation in the development of the SMP is important. The SMP workshops are the first step in your involvement. If you would like to receive updates on SMP progress, provide comments and recommendations on preliminary work products, and be notified of future public meetings, please fill in the contact information on the Workshop sign-in sheet.

You can also send your contact information to Shelby Tucker at SANDAG, 401 B Street, Suite 800, San Diego, CA 92101. Email address: stu@sandag.org. Fax: (619) 699-1916. Phone: (619) 699-1905.

If you have technical questions you can contact the SMP Project Manager, Clifton Davenport, at the California Geological Survey, 135 Ridgeway Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401. Email address: Clifton.Davenport@fire.ca.gov Fax: (707) 576 – 2844, Phone: (707) 576-2986.

Also, you can look at the SMP website for more details:
<http://www.dbw.ca.gov/csmw.htm>

Finally, if you are a member of an organization – public, private, or non-profit – involved in coastal issues and actions, please take the time to fill out the questionnaire distributed at the SMP Workshop. Your answers will allow the SMP to be responsive to your group’s concerns, goals and capabilities. Additional copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from Jennifer Cordeau at SANDAG or the SMP website.

