



## Overview of Connecticut's Coastal Management Program

### Coastal Management in Connecticut - What is it all about?

We all need Connecticut's coast for all of the services it provides for recreation, tourism, commercial activities, and enjoyment of its resources, all of which benefit the state economically. We all use our coast in one way or another, so we all have to work together to ensure it remains available for future generations. That is where coastal management comes in to guide activities taking place where the land meets the sea. In the case of Connecticut, our emphasis is on balancing protection of the fragile coastal resources of the Long Island Sound ecosystem with sustainable economic uses of the shoreline.

Coastal management in Connecticut is a comprehensive, cooperative program that functions at all levels of government. [Connecticut's Coastal Management Program](#) is administered by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and is approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. Under the statutory umbrella of Connecticut's Coastal Management Act (CCMA), enacted in 1980, the Coastal Management Program ensures balanced growth along the coast, restores coastal habitat, improves public access, protects water-dependent uses, public trust waters and submerged lands, and promotes [harbor management](#) and facilitates research. The Coastal Management Program also regulates work in tidal, coastal, and navigable waters and tidal wetlands under CCMA (Sections [22a-90 – 22a-112](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS)), the Structures Dredging and Fill statutes (CGS Sections [22a-359 – 22a-363f](#)) and the Tidal Wetlands Act (CGS Sections [22a-28 – 22a-35](#)). Development of the shoreline is regulated at the local level through municipal planning and the zoning boards and commissions under the policies of the CCMA, with technical assistance and oversight provided by Program staff.

### How Coastal Management Works in Connecticut

#### Urban Waterfront Revitalization

Coastal Management Program staff are working with many of our state's urban communities on redevelopment projects to reclaim their once-active waterfronts. Central to many of these efforts is the revitalization of developed shorefronts to accommodate active water-dependent uses such as waterborne commerce, commercial and recreational fishing, boating, and public access.

#### Watershed Management/Nonpoint Source Pollution Control

As a result of the recognized need for states to better control nonpoint sources of pollution, Connecticut has developed a [Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program](#) in accordance with [Section 6217](#) of the Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990. Connecticut's program is based upon a comprehensive watershed approach directed at restoring and protecting coastal water quality. In particular, appropriate management measures will control polluted runoff from a variety of areas, including agriculture facilities, marinas and urban construction sites, and roads and highways.

#### Protecting Water-Dependent Uses

Protecting water-dependent uses is an integral part of the Coastal Management Program. Water-dependent uses are defined in the Connecticut Coastal Management Act as recreational, commercial, and industrial uses and facilities which require direct access to, or location in, marine or tidal waters. Some examples of water-dependent uses are marinas, boatyards, marine transportation facilities, and general public access.

### Improving Public Access

One of the key goals of the Coastal Management Program is improving public access to Connecticut's coast. Since the start of the program in 1980, it has provided the citizens of Connecticut with better access to the state's waterfront areas, including the addition of 12.5 miles of coastal access. The [Connecticut Coastal Access Guide](#) identifies more than 300 coastal sites where the public can enjoy diverse access opportunities.

### Restoring Coastal Habitat

CCMA built on the foundation laid by the landmark 1969 State Tidal Wetlands Act by creating a statewide policy encouraging the restoration of degraded tidal wetlands. Now, years later, Connecticut has one of the most impressive programs in the country, which serves as a model for other restoration efforts nationwide. The Coastal Management Program also works with other parts of DEEP to restore riverine migratory corridors for anadromous fish passage and barrier beaches, essential habitat for many endangered or threatened bird species.

### Flood and Erosion Control/Coastal Hazards

Living on or near Connecticut's coast means dealing with occasional, and potentially severe, [coastal hazards](#) such as erosion and flooding. The coastal geology of Long Island Sound is in constant flux – some areas are eroding, others are accreting or adding sand, and still others both erode and accrete depending on weather and seasonal factors. Coastal Management standards permit the repair of existing erosion control structures and, in limited circumstances and with appropriate authorization, the construction of new erosion control measures. The goal for new development, however, is one of prevention – designing and building with appropriate setbacks to prevent the need for such structures.

### Promoting Harbor Management

Since the passage of the [Harbor Management Act](#) in 1984, Coastal Management Program staff have been working with coastal towns to prepare appropriate harbor management plans. Among other things, the plans provide for the preservation and use of the coastal resources of the harbor, for the location and distribution of seasonal moorings and anchorages, and for unobstructed access to federal navigation channels. Please refer to the [Harbor Management Plan Status List](#) to see which coastal towns have approved harbor management plans and which towns have plans currently under development. Visit [The Connecticut Harbor Masters Program](#) webpage for more information.

### Facilitating Research

The Coastal Management Program has actively supported research on estuarine resources and related water quality issues. The [Long Island Sound Research Fund](#) has awarded 40 grants to Connecticut academic institutions for research projects since 1990. Examples of projects include mapping the existing eelgrass beds in the Sound to assess water quality requirements for eelgrass restoration. In addition, the Long Island Sound License Plate Program provides research grants to benefit the health of the Sound.

### Managing and Protecting Coastal Resources

As the uses and users of the coastal area increase over time, the Coastal Management Program must be vigilant in balancing protection of coastal resources with sustainable economic uses of the shoreline. By integrating the coastal permitting program with oversight of municipal coastal development, the Program has created a partnership with coastal municipalities to address the complex issues which arise as a result of these growing pressures along the shoreline.

### Protecting the Public Trust

Although much of Connecticut's coastline is privately owned, the coastal tidelands actually belong to all people—as a result of a common law principle known as the Public Trust

Doctrine. The Doctrine dates back to Roman times and holds that coastal states hold the submerged lands and waters waterward of the mean high water line in trust for the public. The Coastal Management Program incorporates this doctrine in its management strategies and continues to work to safeguard the public's rights to the coastal area.

### LIS License Plate Program

You are probably familiar with the blue and white lighthouse "Preserve the Sound" license plates. In fact, since they went on sale in 1992, over 100,000 citizens have purchased one for their car, combination or commercial vehicle, or boat trailer and, in doing so, have demonstrated their support for the preservation and restoration of the Sound. Plate sales have raised over \$5.3 million, funding over 330 projects in the areas of public access, education and outreach, habitat restoration, and research to benefit Long Island Sound. The money from the sale of the plates and from private donations is placed in the Long Island Sound Fund, administered by the Coastal Management Program. Past grant recipients have included municipalities, schools, universities, non-profit groups, land trusts, and other interested organizations.

### Coastal Management Nationwide

Since its inception in 1980, Connecticut's Coastal Management Program has been a national pioneer in its efforts to balance protection and management of coastal resources. The program has led the way in the restoration of tidal wetlands, the use of geographic information systems as a tool to enhance the efficiency of coastal regulatory programs, the coordination of decision making involving federal, state, and municipal government, and the designation of the lower Connecticut River as "Wetlands of International Importance" under the Ramsar Convention.

### Looking to the Future

With public support, the Connecticut Coastal Management Program will continue to lead the way in the protection of our shoreline in the new millennium. Through active and cooperative management, the Program is working to ensure that the balance between the preservation and use of our most valuable coastal resources is protected in perpetuity--to keep our coast a place where our citizens can live, work, and recreate.

### Contact Information

Land and Water Resources Division  
Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse  
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
79 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106-5127  
Phone: 860-424-3019

This overview is designed to provide basic information and answer general questions. Refer to the appropriate statutes and regulations for the specific regulatory language of the different permit programs. This document should not be relied upon to determine whether or not an environmental permit is required. It is your responsibility to obtain and comply with all necessary permits.