

## **Presentation Summary**

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Few question that Massachusetts coastal communities face a challenging future. The predicted effects of global climate change will likely exacerbate current management difficulties, as communities struggle to protect their residents and property (public and private) against likely worsening flooding, erosion, and other coastal hazards. Meanwhile, development and redevelopment pressure is predicted to increase. Following are two ways the Commonwealth is working to help Massachusetts coastal communities to address a changing climate.

### **The Coastal Hazards Commission**

In response to a growing awareness of likely climate changes, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts assembled The Coastal Hazards Commission (CHC) in February 2006. The organization was tasked with considering coastal hazards including erosion, flooding, and sea-level rise that threaten coastal development and community infrastructure. The goal of the CHC was to review existing coastal hazards practices and policies, identify data and information gaps, and prepare a report with recommendations to the Legislature. The six state legislators, six state officials, and two local officials appointed to the CHC were assisted by the Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) as chair and staff. Five working groups of experts in various fields including policy, planning, emergency management, biology, geology, and engineering also provided recommendations to the CHC. The working groups focused on (1) coastal hazards data and tools, (2) policies, (3) planning and regulations, (4) structural measures to protect coastal development, and (5) public coastal infrastructure. The CHC report, which was released in May 2007, includes 29 recommendations and potential implementation plans. Explicitly recognizing a need to improve understanding of the challenges related to climate change, the CHC recommends that Massachusetts work with federal agencies to map and model climate change and sea-level rise data related to coastal hazards in Massachusetts. The CHC's four priority recommendations are:

- Assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency financially and technically to update and maintain Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the coastal zone of Massachusetts. (Recommendation #1, Hazards Information Working Group)
- Establish a storm-resilient communities program to provide case studies for effective coastal smart growth planning and implementation. (Recommendation #9, Policy Working Group)
- Develop, update, and implement hazard mitigation plans for coastal communities. (Recommendation #16, Planning and Regulations Working Group)

- Implement a program of regional sand management through policies, regulations, and activities that promote nourishment as the preferred alternative for coastal hazard protection. (Recommendation #22, Protection Working Group)

The CHC's final report can be found at [mass.gov/czm/chc](http://mass.gov/czm/chc).

## **StormSmart Coasts**

The new StormSmart Coasts program, due to be launched in the Spring of 2008, is one way that the Commonwealth's Office of Coastal Zone Management is working to address the predicted effects of climate change on the coasts. The StormSmart Coasts program is designed to assist local efforts to improve the way coastal floodplains are managed. Its target audience is people working at the local level, particularly municipal employees and local elected officials.

Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, StormSmart Coasts offers a "menu" of ways that communities can work to protect people and property. Communities can pick and choose from the menu according to their wants, needs, and available resources. The tools range from providing information on how communities can follow existing National Flood Insurance Program requirements to how they can progressively work to encourage growth in safer areas while discouraging it in areas likely to be damaged by storms.

StormSmart Coasts also provides detailed information on such topics as how communities can best minimize legal complications when regulating development and redevelopment in coastal areas, and information on the legally-robust No Adverse Impact approach to floodplain development. The StormSmart Coasts website ([mass.gov/czm/stormsmart](http://mass.gov/czm/stormsmart)) will house all of the available resources, including technical assistance, fact sheets, case studies, and pre-prepared presentations that local officials can download and use to explain the benefits of safer use of coastal floodplains.

Particularly during this development stage, the StormSmart Coasts program welcomes your thoughts and comments. Please contact Wes Shaw at the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management at 339/203-5399 or [wes.shaw@state.ma.us](mailto:wes.shaw@state.ma.us). Contact information is also available on the program's website: [mass.gov/czm/stormsmart](http://mass.gov/czm/stormsmart).