

Integration Strategy Concept

A. Summary of Coastal Management Problem

The ultimate success of many of Virginia's efforts to manage cumulative and secondary impacts will depend on the successful integration of its various regulatory and planning programs. Because Virginia operates a "networked" coastal program comprised of many individual programs housed in separate agencies, coordination and cooperation to achieve common goals is a continuing challenge. Managers at both state and local levels recognize the need for a concerted effort to ensure that objectives are consistent, and that decision making is always cognizant of potential consequences to other programs' goals. For instance, when the VMRC leases a parcel of state-owned subaqueous lands to an individual, and issues a permit for placement of structures on that parcel for aquaculture, success of the venture is far from assured. The physical, chemical and biological conditions at the site will ultimately be determined by a myriad of other regulatory and management actions regarding the use of surrounding waters and lands. VMRC can exercise jurisdiction over shoreline structures on adjacent riparian properties. CBLAD, through the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulates activities in the 100' riparian buffer. DEQ exercises regulatory authority over point source discharges in the area. VDH's Bureau of Shellfish Sanitation decides if the area's water quality is suitable for growing marketable shellfish. And the local government controls the type of land development in the area, ultimately affecting the nonpoint source impacts on water quality. Sustaining a viable aquaculture industry in a specific area requires that all these potential decisions be made with a view to the cumulative and secondary impacts on the desired use of the aquatic resource. Virginia is interested in enhancing the coordination by developing protocols that will formalize important information transfers, and ensure coherent management efforts.

B. Proposed Program Changes

Specific program changes would include the development of protocols for consensus management goals and the development of individual agency policy guidance for inclusion of the consensus management goals into any regulatory and programmatic actions.

C. Anticipated Effect of Proposed Program Changes

It is anticipated that the proposed program changes will make critical links among many of Virginia's coastal resources programs by modifying individual agency decision processes. It will lead to coordination of programs focused on land use management, pollution abatement, water resource management, fisheries management, and a reduction in conflicting management actions. The sheer size and complexity of the relevant programs makes structural changes impractical. The optimal solution is development of formal protocols to ensure effective and efficient transfer of critical information. This can provide the framework for consistency in planning and management.

D. Appropriateness of Change

The proposed changes are essential to the long term success of Virginia's Coastal Resource Management Program. This strategy directly addresses management of the cumulative and secondary impacts resulting from individual regulatory decisions in the coastal zone. The goal is to preserve desirable conditions and use opportunities by recognizing the linkage between individual actions.

E. General Work Plan

There are three basic tasks to be undertaken in this strategy. The first is identification of the potential secondary impacts resulting from various types of individual management decisions. This is the basis for identifying the needed linkages between programs. The second task is development of a consensus on geo-referenced management goals. This is the process of agreeing on the desired management outcome for selected areas. The third and final task, is development of the procedures by which management agencies will coordinate their decision making.

It is estimated that these tasks will require approximately three years to complete and could begin as early as FY 03. The project will be staffed by VIMS and the Virginia Coastal Program. An advisory committee of the Coastal Policy Team will be formed to guide and review the project staff's efforts.

First Year Activities

During the first year of the project, all regulatory and management programs affecting use of aquatic habitat, riparian land use, and point/nonpoint source pollution will be reviewed. The objectives will be to identify potential secondary impacts associated with each type of decision, and to determine how those impacts are, or might be, included in the decision process. This review will be concluded by the end of the first year.

The project staff will also work with the advisory committee to identify each agency's management goals for aquatic resources in Virginia. The objective will be to document the relevant goals for each area of Virginia's coastal waters. This task will be undertaken in a GIS format. Upon completion of the mapping effort, the project staff and advisory committee will strive to identify congruence among the various individual goals. The objective will be to develop a strawman consensus for consideration by the full Coastal Policy Team, and through them to the individual agency hierarchies, for review. In the first year, this process will be advanced to the stage of the strawman development.

Second Year Activities

During the second year of the project, efforts will be concentrated on development of an initial consensus for targeting management goals. It is anticipated that this process will be complicated, requiring some analysis of legal authorities, regulatory limitations, and consequences for other management programs. The goal will be to identify at least an initial set of areas in which agencies can agree on specific desirable outcomes (in terms of uses), and possess the necessary authorities to work collectively toward those ends. This process is expected to require multiple iterations of drafting and review, but the purpose is to identify several specific situations which can be further analyzed. By the end of the second year, several specific areas will be identified along with the consensus management goals for those areas.

Third Year Activities

Once specific areas have been targeted, the project staff will use the analysis of regulatory processes, and the target outcomes to evaluate the exact nature of any required coordination. The objective will be to document for each relevant regulatory process, what information it

should consider, and what range of decisions are consistent with the consensus goal. The product of this effort will be generation of formal protocols for information sharing, and guidance for decision making.

F. Summary of Program Costs

It is anticipated that the project will take three years to complete with the level of funding at approximately \$120,000 dollars per year. Much of this funding will go towards staffing at VIMS and the Coastal Program.

G. Likelihood of Attaining the Proposed Program Changes

This strategy seeks to accomplish a critical advance in the Virginia coastal program – formal interagency coordination for specific management goals. While agencies share information and objectives continually, this project seeks to specifically address the secondary and cumulative impacts of individual management decisions. This requires a type of advanced, cross-media thinking which is generally believed essential, but which has defied effective implementation. The project outcome does not depend on development of new authorities, but rather modification of procedures. By taking a simple, and very practical approach to development of a solution, and by focusing on achievable first steps, this project has a high probability for successful completion.