

TREASURE

OUR

Commonwealth

COASTS

and

ESTUARIES

miles of coastline
250

coastal population* in 2000
69,221

fy03 czma core (section 306)
funding
\$987,000

fy03 czma enhancements
(section 309) funding
\$80,000

fy03 coastal nonpoint
implementation
\$237,000

* also total Commonwealth
population

THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS IS MADE UP OF 14 ISLANDS THAT SPAN 440 MILES OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC OCEAN. SINCE ACHIEVING COMMONWEALTH STATUS IN 1977, POPULATION GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN DRAMATIC. A BOOM IN TOURISM AND THE GARMENT INDUSTRY LED THE POPULATION TO GROW BY 60% BETWEEN 1990 AND 2000 TO 69,221 RESIDENTS. OF THESE, 90% LIVE SAIPAN, 5% ON TINIAN AND 5% ON ROTA. FEW PEOPLE LIVE ON THE NORTHERN 11 ISLANDS.

THE ECONOMIC BOOM LEFT A COSTLY LEGACY, ESPECIALLY ON SAIPAN. SEWER OVERFLOWS, NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION RUNOFF, ILLEGAL DISCHARGES, COMPETITION AMONG MARINE RECREATIONAL USERS, AND DECLINING FISHERIES ARE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES. TOURISM, AN ECONOMIC MAINSTAY, IS HEAVILY RELIANT ON NEARSHORE COASTAL AND OCEAN RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY CORAL REEFS. COMMERCIAL AND SUBSISTENCE FISHING AND COASTAL RECREATION ALSO DEPEND ON A HEALTHY COASTAL AND OCEAN ENVIRONMENT.

THE COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF COASTAL RESOURCES. THE CZMA, ADMINISTERED BY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA), RECOGNIZES A NATIONAL INTEREST IN OUR COASTAL AND OCEAN AREAS. IT ALLOWS THE COMMONWEALTH, NOT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, TO LOCALLY DETERMINE HOW BEST TO BALANCE CONSERVATION OF THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT WITH HUMAN USES THAT DEPEND ON COASTAL RESOURCES.

THE CZMA IN THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Northern Mariana Islands Coastal Resource Management Program

Approved: 1980

Lead Agency: Coastal Resources Management Office

The Commonwealth's Coastal Management Office works to manage coastal development and to protect and restore coral reefs, wetlands, mangroves, lagoons, and other critical coastal resources. Since the islands are small, the Coastal Management Office's jurisdiction covers the entire land and water area of the Commonwealth. Program strategies include issuance, monitoring, and enforcement of development permits; public education and involvement; coral reef monitoring; special area planning; remediation of problem areas; and federal consistency review.



Accomplishments of the Commonwealth's coastal program include:

- *Implementing and enforcing a permit system for controlling coastal development. This program also serves as the general land use management system for the commonwealth.*
- *Developing a comprehensive plan for the Saipan Lagoon to manage the environmental impacts of tourism, commerce, traditional uses, and public recreation.*
- *Identifying wetlands and other coastal areas of particular concern and controlling development impacts to those areas.*
- *Developing a coral reef monitoring program to establish baseline and long-term trend information about reef health and to monitor specific problem areas.*
- *Enhancing public knowledge and involvement in coastal management issues.*
- *Improving government capacity to use geographic information systems (GIS) and assembling and cataloging GIS data.*
- *Partnering with the NOAA Coastal Services Center and NOAA National Geodetic Survey to update the Commonwealth's geodetic control, which supports GIS, engineering, geophysical, charting, and mapping applications for planning and decision-making needs.*
- *Working with federal partners, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake special studies including beach erosion at Managaha Island and stormwater runoff into the Saipan Lagoon.*

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

The Coastal Resource Management Office coordinates coral reef management with the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Quality and Division of Fish and Wildlife. In cooperation with the Office of the Governor, the agencies are developing a coordinating structure that will provide new focus and better communication among coral reef programs.