



Project Location

Coos Bay Estuary, Oregon

Project Duration

November 2016 to October 2018

Project Lead

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Project Type

Integrated Assessment – evaluating options for action

Project Partners

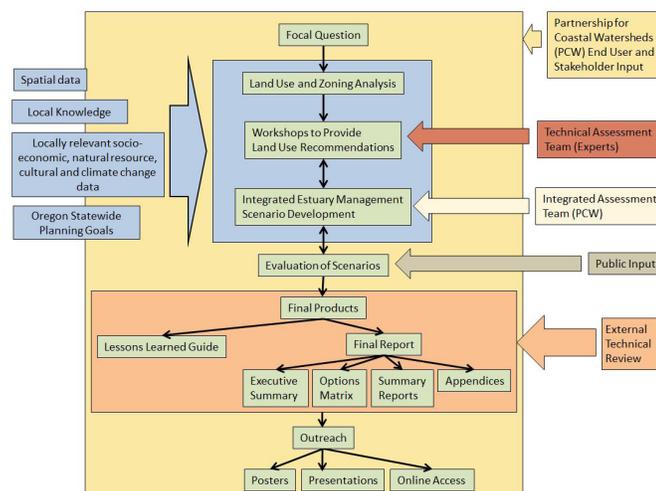
- South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Partnership for Coastal Watersheds
- Coos County
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development
- University of Oregon Community Service Center
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- South Coast Development Council
- City of Coos Bay

Assessing Estuarine and Shoreland Use and Zoning for the Coos Bay Estuary

Overview

As the sixth largest estuary on the west coast, the Coos Bay estuary is one of Oregon's most important ecological resources, both in its abundance, diversity, and quality, and in the economic and cultural value it provides. However, modern management of the estuary and surrounding shorelands is based on the economic and social drivers of the 1970s, when local land use plans were developed. The surrounding community now agrees that current land use regulations need to evolve to reflect today's economic and social drivers, while proactively addressing environmental changes and protecting natural resources.

This project is looking at how to create a modernized land use plan for the Coos Bay estuary that balances responsible economic development, social interests, and protection of natural resources. In order to identify areas where zone change will benefit estuarine management, this project will synthesize existing information to compare actual uses of estuarine and shorelands to zoned uses. For areas where lands are underutilized, have conflicting zones, or have obsolete zone designations, team members, end users, and stakeholders will assess economic, social, and environmental information. This will generate scenarios and recommendations that Coos County can use to improve its estuarine and shoreland management.



Anticipated Benefits

- Viable estuary management options will be identified from multiple stakeholder perspectives, allowing Coos County to understand environmental, socio-cultural, and economic interests when considering best uses of the land.
- Coos County will gain a mechanism for identifying and reconciling competing and disparate community interests as it modernizes its estuary land use plan.
- The cities of Coos Bay and North Bend will have up-to-date information with which to revise their estuary management plans and re-establish jurisdictional coordination.
- By sharing lessons learned through this project, Coos County will provide a model for the state to facilitate updates in other coastal counties.

Project Approach

The project team will first conduct an analysis of existing land use and zoning designations to determine discrepancies between how lands are zoned and how they are currently being used, verifying that they are serving their highest and best use. The analysis will identify anomalous lands—those which are underutilized, have conflicting zones, have constraints, or whose zone designations have not kept pace with local policy changes and are now obsolete. The land use and zoning analysis methodology and assumptions will be developed in close coordination with the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds, a community stakeholder group.

The anomalous lands will then be evaluated by a technical assessment team through three analysis workshops focused on each of the following areas: economic development, natural resources protection and restoration, and socio-cultural identity. Each assessment team will propose one potential land use scenario focused on their core area of interest, which will be used to inform multiple integrated land use scenarios developed by the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds. Integrated land use scenarios will be shared with the public for feedback, and then further refined.

Targeted End Users and Anticipated Products

- An evaluation of options for Coos County to determine the best ways to re-designate land use zoning and ordinance.
- A lessons guide that summarizes key successes, difficulties, and obstacles after each major step of the project to share with coastal planners in Oregon and beyond.
- Products will also be shared through presentations of the products to Coos County, city of Coos Bay, city of North Bend, regional and national coastal managers, and other end users and stakeholders engaged in the project.

About the Science Collaborative

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's Science Collaborative supports collaborative research that addresses coastal management problems important to the reserves. The Science Collaborative is managed by the University of Michigan's Water Center through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Funding for the research reserves and this program comes from NOAA. Learn more at coast.noaa.gov/nerrs or graham.umich.edu/water/nerrs.