State of Our Oceans

Priority Coastal Problems

– Nutrient overloading
– Pathogen contamination
– Toxic chemical pollution
– Alteration of natural flow regimes
– Habitat loss and degradation
– Decline of native flora, fish, and wildlife populations
– Introduced species
– Overfishing
– Marine Debris

Our costs are in fair to poor condition

(Interagency National Coastal Condition Report, pre-publication)
As a result, we face:

- Increased impervious surfaces
- Competing uses - habitat, recreation, industries, shipping, homes, fisheries, energy
- Increased demands – space, energy, waste disposal, recreation

Underlying problem is that more than half of the population in the continental U.S. lives in the coastal zone -- only 17% of the land area.
Challenges

Environmental Issues:

- **Nonpoint Source Pollution**
  - agriculture and urban runoff
  - air deposition
- **Direct Impacts**
  - point sources (e.g., combined sewer overflows, sanitary sewer overflows, concentrated animal feeding operations)
  - habitat alteration
- **Invasive Species**
- **Environmental Information**
Other Environmental Challenges:

• Jurisdictional Issues
  -- legal authorities extend a variety of distances into ocean waters

• International Scope
  -- U.S. environment affected by other nations

• New Threats
  -- potential for terrorism
  -- deep sea activities (e.g., bioprospecting)
The Environment and The Economy

A Healthy and Productive Environment is a Key Element of the Nation’s Economic Vitality

- Economies of coastal communities -- and the country -- depend on healthy ocean and coastal resources.
- Human health can be adversely affected by a degraded environment.
- Coastal communities and natural resources are physically at risk from increased frequency and severity of destructive storms, flooding, erosion, and drought.
- Coastal habitat and marine organisms depend on the protection of healthy coastal and ocean resources.
Opportunities

• Promote better stewardship through local (watershed-based) and voluntary programs.
• Promote habitat restoration.
• Provide international leadership in protecting our oceans.
  • Promote monitoring, pollution prevention, and tech transfer -- apply lessons learned and research from existing programs.
  • Support comprehensive research/monitoring for all parameters in order to support science-based decision making.
Working together