



# “Florida Needs Ocean Management!”

## Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida

Funded by The Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation

June 2009

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Florida’s economic future depends on healthy oceans coasts. It is imperative that the State move to protect and sustain these resources. Florida must address important issues arising from the mix of potentially conflicting ocean uses, such as offshore drilling, liquefied natural gas terminals, current and wind energy facilities, beach nourishment, and fisheries. Our growing use of the sea must be balanced with stewardship for future generations. Ocean management plans provide tools for smarter, sustainable use of our oceans and coasts. Comparable to land use planning, marine spatial planning will help manage and provide opportunity for development in the oceans. Other coastal states are advancing their protection and sustainable use of marine resources by developing ocean management plans. At a time of increasing algal blooms, declining marine species, degraded coral reefs, and climate change, Florida must do the same. This report prepared by the Florida Ocean Alliance (FOA) describes the lessons learned by other states and the processes they used to develop ocean management plans.



Fortunately, Florida has several agencies with jurisdiction over ocean and coastal issues, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. These three agencies coordinate the activities involving regulation of the State’s oceans and coasts. Florida also has invaluable federal marine protected

areas: estuarine research reserves, national parks and wildlife refuges, nationally designated estuaries, and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Together with an award winning system of state parks and aquatic preserves, these protected areas form the basis for developing an ocean management plan in the State.



### ROLE OF THE FLORIDA OCEAN ALLIANCE

The Florida Ocean Alliance was awarded a grant by The Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation in December, 2008, to review other relevant state ocean management plans and develop guidance for working toward an Ocean Management Plan for Florida. A formal stakeholder review was included by public, private and non-profit sectors. FOA is uniquely positioned to bring forth this issue in the State. It is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing Florida’s coastal and ocean resources for continued social and economic benefits. Its members represent both the private, and public sectors, including representatives from ocean-related industries in tourism, ports, shipping, fishing, boating, and cruising and those from non-profit research organizations, academia, and public interest groups. Recognizing the interconnection of Florida to its neighbors in the Caribbean Basin, along the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Coast, the Florida Ocean Alliance is also committed to positioning Florida as an international leader in integrating ocean conservation, education, and responsible economic development.

**LESSONS LEARNED: BEST PRACTICES OF OTHER STATES IN DEVELOPING OCEAN MANAGEMENT PLANS**

A review was undertaken of the processes by which ocean management plans were developed in other states, including California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, states surrounding the Gulf of Mexico, and the states and provinces surrounding the Gulf of Maine. The purpose of the review was to identify best practices in each state or region and to consider the content and process used to develop these plans. There are generally four steps to the process:

1. Develop a blueprint for ocean management.
2. Identify strategies and funding to move forward with an Ocean Management Plan.
3. Develop a process and timeline for proceeding with the Plan.
  - A. Initial Process: Select a process that fits the state.
  - B. Stakeholders: Be overly inclusive of ocean and coastal interests.
4. Provide for implementation from the project's initiation.



Findings conclude that ocean plans were authorized by either state legislation or by an executive order from the Governor, or some hybrid combining these two. Prior to developing an ocean plan, public/private partnership groups were often involved in formulating a related strategy. Stakeholder input and involvement were found to be essential from the very beginning of the process. Plans were formalized through a lead state agency, a state executive office, or some type of state commission. Processes have been fashioned to meet the particular needs of each state or area. Timelines are multi-year since plans are ongoing and in various stages of development. While Florida can learn from other states' experience in ocean management, it must develop its

own vehicle for ocean management that is best suited for State waters.



Florida needs to be a proactive leader, not just react to crises, in managing its precious oceans. It is especially important to develop a plan since various interests are now proposing multiple uses of the seabed floor for oil and gas pipelines, transmission cables, wind farms, and placement of shipping channels, each of which presents challenges to the preservation of coastal and ocean resources. Congress is also considering legislation that would zone new offshore energy projects on the outer continental shelf, designating specific areas of the sea for energy uses and preserving others for marine resources. In Florida, the House of Representatives initiated a discussion on the use of Florida's offshore submerged lands for energy production.

**NEXT STEPS**

We hope that this document will be useful in generating discussion and facilitating movement on developing an ocean management plan for Florida. An executive order or legislation could be used to begin the planning process. Timing is important due to the emerging issues in ocean use and current interest in ocean governance in many arenas, including the federal government, coastal states and regions, and academia and non-governmental organizations. Human uses of the ocean are creating conflicts in data, tools, and policy more quickly than our capacity to manage them. The Florida Ocean Alliance welcomes responses to this document and hopes that it will lead to a thoughtful public discussion by Florida's policymakers and citizens on an ocean management plan for the State.

*The final report: "Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida" is available at the Florida Ocean Alliance website:  
<http://www.floridaoceanalliance.org>*