

Section Three: Primary Audiences of the Coastal States Organization

Coastal issues are diverse and complex, affecting the environmental health, economic prosperity and quality of life of literally tens of million of residents nationwide. An equally diverse and complex set of institutional arrangements has formed over time, with every component maintaining an overriding interest in some aspect of coastal science, education, policy and/ or management. In fact, the Ocean and Coastal Conservation Guide (2005), an exhaustive descriptive inventory of coastal- related agencies, organizations and other institutions, lists approximately 1,600 entities nationally. Given that many such institutions have multiple relevant departments and offices, the potential number of interested individuals can be in the tens of thousands.

One of CSO’s project objectives includes a determination of primary audiences “who are potential partners or are likely to act on and support CSO’s findings and recommendations.” With this in mind, the several CSO white papers, focus group summaries and surveys were reviewed. Various directories and other reference materials were then consulted, and an extensive yet manageable primary audience list was generated. Criteria included

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stature and credibility in the coastal community; degree of influence in affecting coastal science, education, policy and/ or management; breadth of focus (state/ regional/ national); likely receptivity to CSO findings and recommendations; and prospective ability or willingness to advance CSO findings and recommendations via partnering, further outreach/ information dissemination, and/ or direct application. Based on those criteria, prospective audiences for CSO were identified, providing the CSSF Project Committee and contractor with a basis for selecting a targeted list of “primary” audiences. Categories emerging from the analysis are as follows:

A. State- based agencies and institutions: This category includes the lead coastal management agencies within state and territorial governments, as well as special intra-state commissions or other entities with relevant authority. Also included in this category are the Sea Grant Programs and Water Resources Research Institutes affiliated with public colleges and universities in all coastal states. Collectively, these state- based entities are largely responsible for the development, implementation and analysis of coastal policy, and sponsor related research, education and development of products and tools. This segment of the CSO audience plays a vital role in advancing the states’ research, information and technology needs. The target audience list presented in Appendix C totals well over 100, representing many CSO member jurisdictions and other prospective CSO partners and constituents.

B. Federal agencies and institutions: Included here are the multitude of principal federal agencies and associated departments and offices with coastal management functions, as well as interagency arrangements (e.g. Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology), and federally funded research agencies (e.g., Oceans Study Board- National Research Council). The extent to which these entities view state coastal managers as primary users of their products vary considerably; a matter to be considered when identifying target audiences for CSO.

Despite the decentralized and localized nature of coastal management, the federal government remains a major force by virtue of an extensive federal legislative and regulatory framework, as well as its research capabilities and fiscal dominance. With respect to the latter, federal funding is a major factor in supporting coastal research, policy development, implementation, and education and outreach activities at the state, territorial and local levels. Entries (in Appendix C) in this category total approximately 40, and include many key line agencies and offices, various special commissions and committees, and federally supported research institutes.

C. Elected officials: Legislators at all levels (federal, state, territorial), as well as governors of coastal jurisdictions, have a key role in the coastal decision-making process. At the Congressional level, approximately a dozen House and Senate committees, most with multiple relevant subcommittees, have responsibility for some aspect of coastal policy and management. In addition, coalitions such as the Oceans Caucus are focal points for deliberation and action on policies that impact all levels of coastal management. Appendix C identifies over 30 contacts within the Congressional portion of this target audience. Not included are the literally hundreds of potential contacts at the state level, including governors' offices, legislative committees, subcommittees and caucuses that can also benefit from CSO findings and recommendations.

D. Regional agencies and institutions: The “re-discovery” of multi-jurisdictional, watershed-based approaches to resource management has reinvigorated many regional agencies and prompted formation of new ones. For example, the report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy clearly advocates a new paradigm for coastal governance centered on a regional approach. Governors of neighboring states have begun new partnerships to address coastal issues and identify science needs on a regional basis (e.g., Northeast Regional Ocean Council, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, West Coast Governors Agreement). Further, the foundation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System is based on a network of regional organizations generally organized around major watersheds/ ecosystems. CSO findings and recommendations will find a receptive audience with these entities, as well as other regional arrangements that include interstate river basin commissions (e.g., Delaware River Basin Commission, Great Lakes Commission), and watershed based federal initiatives (e.g., U.S. EPA Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes Programs). Appendix C presents a selective listing of such entities, totaling approximately 20 agencies, organizations and institutions. In preparing and delivering the “CSO message” to such entities, it is critically important to place that message in a regional context to enhance its relevance and potential impact. Toward that end, usage of CSO’s regional products, such as the focus group outcomes, should be maximized in tailoring the message.

E. National nonprofit organizations: Nonprofit organizations expressing interest in coastal management issues number in the thousands, and range from local, volunteer-based entities to large national and international organizations with sizeable professional staffs and highly influential roles in shaping coastal policy and management decisions. This includes entities with a predominant coastal focus (e.g., The Ocean Conservancy), and those with a broader mandate yet significant potential influence (e.g., Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters). Appendix C presents contact information for approximately 30 organizations that merit “primary audience” status. Given that many serve as “umbrella” organizations for other groups and often have a sizeable membership, they have the potential to be highly effective partners in publicizing coastal research, information and technology needs (and associated CSO findings and recommendations.) Among many others, the American Planning Association and Smart Growth Network are potential partners in addressing coastal management needs and opportunities.

F. National Associations: A number of national associations have an interest in coastal research, management and technology issues, and provide an outstanding forum that attracts leading practitioners and public officials. Such associations (e.g., Water Environment Federation, American Water Resources Association, Coastal Engineering Research Council of the American Society of Civil Engineers) regularly sponsor conferences for information exchange and technology transfer and, as such, constitute key target audiences for CSO. In addition, this category includes the numerous multi-jurisdictional coalitions of public officials (e.g., Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administrators, Association of State Wetlands Managers) whose membership rosters are populated with prospective CSO partners and constituents. Appendix C presents approximately a dozen entries in this category.

While large, it is important to re-emphasize that the contact list is a selective one by design. It should be viewed as a starting point for dissemination/ partnership building efforts, while fully recognizing that there are multiple other entities that can be instrumental in advancing CSO's interests.