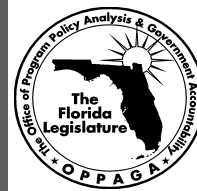




Office of Program Policy Analysis And Government Accountability



John W. Turcotte, Director

January 1998

Follow-Up Report on the Florida Coastal Management Program Administered by the Department of Community Affairs

Abstract

The Governor's Office and the Department of Community Affairs have eliminated the duplicative Florida Coastal Management Program efforts noted in our previous report. However, the performance measures for the Program do not indicate its effect on Florida's coastal resources.

Purpose

In accordance with s. 11.45(7)(f), F.S., this follow-up report informs the Legislature of actions the Department of Community Affairs has taken in response to our Report No. 94-37, issued in March 1995. This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the Department has addressed the findings and recommendations included in that report.

Background

The Florida Coastal Management Program is the lead entity that coordinates government activities concerning the protection, preservation and wise development of our valuable and fragile coastal resources. The Program balances the social and economic needs of Floridians with the long-term protection of coastal areas by providing education, training and technical assistance to citizens, businesses and government agencies.

In addition, the Program includes the Florida State Clearinghouse, which helps insure that federal development activity in the coastal zone complies with state and local laws. The federal Coastal Zone Management Act gives the state the ability to require

that all federal activities within the state be consistent with the statutes contained in the Florida Coastal Management Program.

The Clearinghouse receives applications for any projects the federal government intends to develop, permit, or license within the coastal zone and distributes them to state and local entities for review. These entities determine whether the proposed projects comply with applicable laws, policies, and procedures. The Clearinghouse then incorporates their review comments into the state's official clearance letter. This letter informs applicants about any changes needed to ensure that the projects comply with state laws.

The Florida Coastal Management Program also provides funding for Innovative Coastal Projects. In Fiscal Year 1996-97, the Program awarded \$1.6 million to local governments, regional organizations, and state agencies to fund projects that address such priorities as protecting coastal and ocean resources, mitigating against coastal hazards, addressing the cumulative and secondary impacts of development and providing public access to coastal resources.

Prior Findings

Our prior report on the Florida Coastal Management Program expressed three concerns. First, the Florida Coastal Management Program and Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting shared responsibility for the Florida State Clearinghouse and were performing duplicative functions. Second, the average length of time the Department took to process Clearinghouse applications had increased from 46 days in 1992 to 54 days in 1994. Third, the Department had not developed

the goals, objectives, and program measures needed to determine the Program's effectiveness.

To eliminate duplicative efforts between the Program and the Governor's Office, we recommended that the Florida Coastal Management Program assume lead agency responsibility for the Clearinghouse. In addition, we recommended that the Department take steps to improve the efficiency of the Clearinghouse review process and improve the goals, objectives, and program measures for the Coastal Zone Management Program.

Current Status

Most of these recommendations were adopted. The Governor's Office and Department agreed to eliminate duplicative Clearinghouse functions, and Executive Order 95-359, effective October 2, 1995, gave the Department lead agency authority for the Clearinghouse. The Order allows the Executive Office of the Governor oversight to ensure the Governor's role as chief planning officer of the State.

The Department also improved the efficiency of the application review process. In Fiscal Year 1996-97, the average time the Department took to review Clearinghouse applications decreased from the prior year's average of 54 days to 45 days.

The Department took steps to refine its goals and priorities to better meet the needs of the coastal zone. In 1995, the Program underwent a self-assessment. This assessment was reviewed and approved by the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which makes funds available to coastal zone management programs. During the self-assessment, Program staff identified specific areas in which the state's efforts to protect and wisely develop the coastal zone needed improvement. These areas were protecting coastal and ocean resources, mitigating against coastal hazards, addressing the cumulative and secondary impacts of development and providing public access to

coastal resources. Staff then developed multi-year strategies for making these improvements.

However, the Department still has not developed specific performance measures and standards needed to judge the effectiveness of the Program. Although it has developed output measures showing the Program's workload, it lacks outcome measures that show how the Program's activities contribute to its broad mission to manage, protect, preserve, and wisely develop Florida's coastal resources.

One of the difficulties the Department may have in tying this broad mission to program outcomes is that the mission depends not only on the activities of the Florida Coastal Management Program but also on the activities of numerous other state and local entities. Consequently, the Department cannot be held fully accountable for the health of Florida's coastal resources.

Even though it cannot be held accountable for outcomes relating to its broad mission, the Department could include these outcomes as informational measures in its legislative budget request. Program staff contract with a private source to collect information on the impact of growth in the coastal zone and the degradation and restoration of coastal resources, which they include in the Florida Assessment of Coastal Trends. This information could be included in the Department's legislative budget request to keep legislators informed on key coastal indicators. While the Legislature could not hold the program fully accountable for these outcome measures, it could use the measures to determine the effectiveness of current laws protecting coastal resources.

In addition, the Department could develop outcome measures more directly linked to the Florida Coastal Management Program. For example, it could develop measures showing the improvements resulting from Clearinghouse reviews of federal activities and measures showing the outcomes of grant projects. The Legislature could hold the Department more directly accountable for these measures.

OPPAGA provides objective, independent, professional analyses of state policies and services to assist the Florida Legislature in decision-making, to ensure government accountability, and to recommend the best use of public resources. Copies of this report in print or alternate accessible format may be obtained by telephone (850/488-0021 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (850/487-3804), in person (Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St.), or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, P.O. Box 1735, Tallahassee, FL 32302).

Web site: <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/>

Project Supervised by: Julie Ferris (850)487-4256

Project Conducted by: Dan Schultz (850)487-3768