

Final Evaluation Findings
MINNESOTA'S LAKE SUPERIOR COASTAL PROGRAM
July 1999 - September 2004

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Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

Section 312 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, requires NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) to conduct a continuing review of the performance of States and Territories with Federally approved Coastal Management Programs. This document sets forth the evaluation findings of the Director of OCRM with respect to Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program for the period from July 1999 through August 2004.

The conclusion of this evaluation is that the Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program (MLSCP) is adhering to the terms of the Coastal Zone Management Act. This document includes many program accomplishments and eight specific Program Suggestions. Program Suggestions are recommendations that the MLSCP should address before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation.

Summary of Accomplishments

The evaluation team documented a number of MLSCP's accomplishments during the review period. These include:

Issue Area	Accomplishment
MLSCP Development and Implementation	The State of Minnesota is commended on the approach it took to develop its Coastal Program, learning from its earlier experience and designing a successful collaboration among local, State, and Federal partners.
Coastal Council	The MLSCP is commended on the development and successful implementation of the Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program
Engaging Coastal Communities	The MLSCP has forged strong partnerships at the local, state and national levels. Most notably, the Program has gained the trust of local communities and these relationships have resulted in a multitude of successful coastal projects.
Engaging Coastal Communities	In response to the unique needs of Minnesota's coastal communities, the MLSCP has developed a highly successful Short Term Action Request grant program that complements the annual funding cycle by providing smaller grants more quickly to address emerging issues.
GIS Assistance	The MLSCP is commended for the development of a comprehensive GIS assistance program. Work by the GIS specialist has added much needed capacity for coastal communities in terms of technical support, computing equipment and software.
Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program	The State is commended on working proactively to address coastal nonpoint source pollution, while still working to achieve full program

	approval.
Partnering with Sea Grant	The MLSCP has developed a strong and successful partnership with the Minnesota Sea Grant to provide innovative and accessible science education programs for the public.
Partnering with NOAA's CSC	The MLSCP is commended on its successful partnership with the NOAA CSC to address the important issue of permit compliance.

Summary of Recommendations

In addition to the accomplishments listed above, the evaluation team identified several areas where the program could be strengthened. These are all Program Suggestions:

#	Issue Area	Recommendation
1	Coastal Council	The MLSCP is encouraged to better describe and communicate the Coastal Council's roles and responsibilities within the framework of the Coastal Program as a whole.
2	Coastal Council	The MLSCP is encouraged to work with the State to develop a clear mechanism for promptly filling vacancies on the Coastal Council.
3	Outreach	The MLSCP is encouraged to develop and implement an education and outreach strategy that provides information on Program organization, priorities and activities.
4	Boundary Expansion	The State of Minnesota is encouraged to work with local partners and OCRM to evaluate the need for, and determine the best method of incorporating, possible boundary changes into the approved MLSCP.
5	GIS Assistance	The MLSCP is encouraged to continue directing resources toward GIS capability in local governments, as well as towards the long-term maintenance of GIS data for use in analysis and tracking of coastal management efforts.
6	Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program	The MLSCP is encouraged to continue working towards full program approval.
7	Partnering with Sea Grant	The MLSCP is encouraged to continue to strengthen its relationship further with the Minnesota Sea Grant by engaging in collaborative programs outside their current grantor-grantee partnership.
8	Planning for the Future	The MLSCP is strongly encouraged to develop a strategic plan, in coordination with internal and external customers, for the next five years of program implementation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Section 312 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, requires NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) to conduct a continuing review of the performance of States and Territories with Federally approved Coastal Management Programs. This document sets forth the evaluation findings of the Director of OCRM with respect to Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program (MLSCP), or Coastal Program, for the period from July 1999 through August 2004. This document includes: an Executive Summary; Program Review Procedures; Program Description; Accomplishments, Review Findings, and Recommendations; a Conclusion; and Appendices A and B.

The recommendations made by this evaluation appear in **bold** type and follow the section of the findings in which the facts relative to the recommendation are discussed. Two types of recommendations are possible: (1) Necessary Actions address programmatic requirements and *must* be implemented by the indicated date; and (2) Program Suggestions describe actions that NOAA believes that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources should take to improve the program, but are not mandatory at this time. Program Suggestions that are reiterated in consecutive evaluations due to continuing problems may be elevated to Necessary Actions. If no dates are indicated, the State is expected to have addressed the recommendations by the time of the next CZMA Section 312 evaluation.

NOAA will consider the findings contained within this document in making future financial assistance award decisions relative to the MLSCP.

II. PROGRAM REVIEW PROCEDURES

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) evaluation staff began review of the MLSCP in May 2004. This included an analysis of the approved MLSCP, previous and current award documents and performance reports, correspondence relating to the MLSCP, and other relevant information. As this is the first program evaluation, there were no previous findings. The evaluation staff of the National Policy and Evaluation Division (NPED) and the Coastal Programs Division (CPD) staff coordinated to determine the issues that would become the main focus of the evaluation. The evaluation team analyzed the State's responses to these specific issues and used them as primary sources of information on the MLSCP's operation.

The Evaluation Team gave special emphasis to the following issues:

- The effectiveness of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the State resource agencies in monitoring and enforcing the core authorities which form the legal basis of the MLSCP;
- Implementation of federal consistency by MDNR and other networked agencies;
- The provision of technical assistance to local governments on coastal issues;
- The role of the Governor's Council in the MLSCP;
- Status of state legislative actions which may affect the MLSCP;
- Opportunities for public participation, both formal and informal;
- The manner in which the State is developing program improvements/enhancements and submitting MLSCP program changes to OCRM;
- The manner in which the MLSCP coordinates with other state, local, and federal agencies and programs;
- Status of MLSCP efforts in public education and program visibility;
- Status of public access opportunities to the coastal zone;
- The manner in which the State exercises leadership through the MLSCP and addresses emerging coastal issues; and,
- Status of federal financial assistance awards and adherence to their programmatic terms and conditions.

A site visit to the State of Minnesota was conducted from September 27 through October 1, 2004. The evaluation site visit team was led by Susan Melnyk of OCRM's NPED, assisted by Kim Penn, Chris Stevens, both from NPED, Meredith Bland of CPD, and Alberto Vargas, Natural Hazards Coordinator for the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. The evaluation team met with representatives of State and local governments, Federal agencies, the Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program, planning agencies, interest group representatives, and private citizens during the site visit.

Prior to the site visit, OCRM provided written notice of the MLSCP evaluation to relevant

Federal agencies and provided opportunities for them to respond. Public Meetings were held on the evenings of Monday, September 27, 2004 from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 525 S. Lake Ave. Suite 400, Duluth, MN 55802, and Wednesday, September 29, 2004, from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., at the Cook County Courthouse, 411 West Second Street, Grand Marais, MN 55604 to provide the public opportunity to respond. There were no attendees to either advertised public meeting. (**Appendix A** lists persons contacted in connection with the evaluation; **Appendix B** contains NOAA's response to written comments received.)

The MLSCP staff was instrumental in setting up meetings and arranging logistics for the evaluation site visit. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.

III. COASTAL AREA DESCRIPTION

The Minnesota Coastal Zone

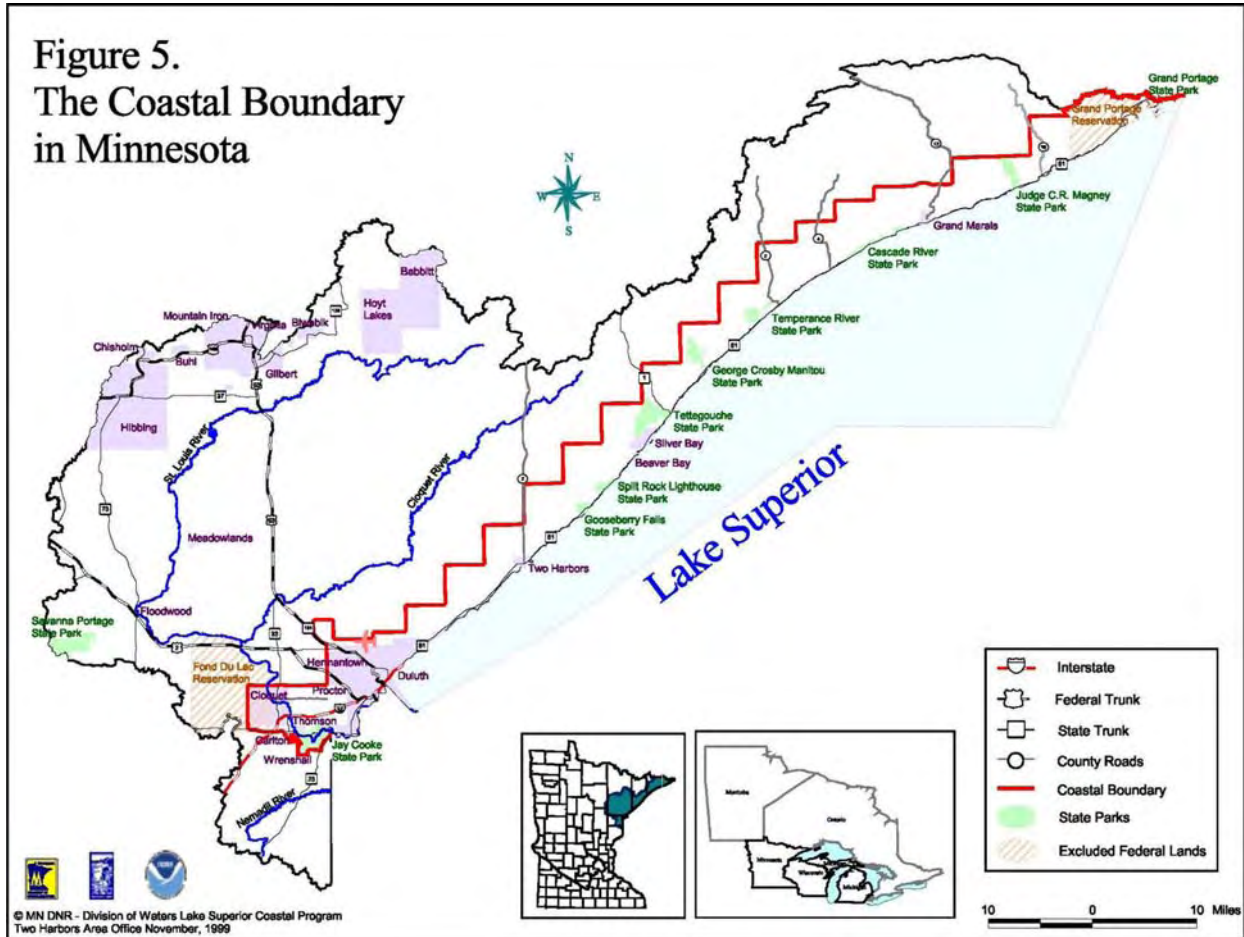
Minnesota's coastal program boundary includes the area approximately six miles inland from Lake Superior following the nearest legal township along the shore, the area determined to have the most significant impact on Lake Superior and its tributaries. The seaward boundary for the MLSCP is the international boundary with Canada and the boundaries with the adjacent states of Wisconsin and Michigan. Within the coastal area are twelve cities, fifteen state parks, one national monument, portions of the Superior National Forest, two Indian reservations and an international seaport. The program boundary includes portions of thirty-one local units of government and is divided into four political units: Cook, Lake, St. Louis, and Carlton Counties. St. Louis County comprises 80 percent of the population of the four-county area, while Carlton County has twelve percent of the population. Cook and Lake Counties comprise two and five percent respectively. Numerous unincorporated settlements are scattered through the area, most of them hugging the coast.

Throughout the coastal zone, common concerns include water quality and erosion, sewage treatment, and the cumulative impacts from growth. Examples follow:

- 1. St. Louis River.** The St. Louis River (the largest tributary to Lake Superior in Minnesota and the United States) flows south through the northeast corner of Carlton County. It is a major source of hydropower generation and recreation in Carlton County. This area faces issues including erosion, contaminant/sediment problems, exotic species, and hydropower operations.
- 2. City of Duluth and Surrounding Areas.** St. Louis County, one of the largest counties in the nation, touches the Lake Superior coast in a small area comprising the City of Duluth and to the east, Lakewood and Duluth Townships. It is an area of urban growth and expansion to the north and west. Of the 206 miles of coastline, 32 are within the City of Duluth. Approximately 70 percent of the coastal area's inhabitants live in Duluth. Major issues affecting this area include: urban runoff, sewage treatment, erosion along waterways, harbor and port planning, and open space planning.
- 3. The North Shore.** Lake Superior's North Shore, located in northeastern Minnesota, extends from the St. Louis River on the south to the Pigeon River on the United States/Canadian border. The North Shore's spectacular scenery is renowned for vertical cliffs, lower rock outcroppings, and rocky beaches. Twenty-two Minnesota streams flow into Lake Superior creating beautiful waterfalls, part of the area's spectacular scenery. The area has retained a pristine quality with large expanses of wilderness because the population and industrial bases have remained small. Technological advances, such as the ability to telecommute, changes in consumer

behavior, and increases in tourism present challenges to the protection of Lake Superior and its coastal ecosystems. Major issues identified include: water quality, sewage treatment, shoreline and ridgeline development pressures, shoreline erosion, recreation, tourism, stream corridors, and unique management areas.

Figure 5.
The Coastal Boundary
in Minnesota



© MN DNR - Division of Waters Lake Superior Coastal Program
 Two Harbors Area Office November, 1999

IV. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

NOAA granted Federal approval to the MLSCP in July 1999, making it the 33rd state to participate in the National Coastal Zone Management Program.

The MLSCP is administered from its Two Harbors Office, along the Lake Superior North Shore, by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) - Waters. The Program is organized as a network, based on existing policies and authorities governing land and water use and resource protection, and carried out via local, State, and Federal agencies. Program guidance is developed under the advisement of the Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program, whose membership is appointed by the Governor.

The Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program was established by executive order in December 1999 and convened on January 21, 2000. Citizens are nominated for membership on the Council by the public and the thirty-one eligible local units of government within the coastal boundary. They are appointed by the Governor. The Coastal Council is comprised of fifteen members with three members coming from each of the four eligible counties (Carlton, St. Louis, Lake and Cook) and three at-large members. The Council is the project priority and selection mechanism through which the MLSCP implements the grant program. The Council establishes the grant program priorities, selects projects for funding, reviews the program's non-project budget, conducts outreach to communities on the MLSCP, and reviews the MLSCP every two years. Its recommendations are forwarded to the DNR Commissioner and NOAA for final approval.

Since inception, the MLSCP has awarded \$6 million for over 200 projects in a variety of areas including conservation, recreation, public access, construction, restoration, historic preservation, acquisition, engineering plans, as well as administration, research and education, and interpretation of coastal resources.

V. REVIEW FINDINGS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation team met with MLSCP partners: state agencies, local governments, non-profit agencies, and citizens. The team observed results of Coastal Program efforts to address the issues identified by NOAA in Section II of this report. NOAA commends Minnesota for providing a balanced program representative of Lake Superior area coastal needs. Listed below are several examples of MLSCP projects that achieved success in addressing the issues identified by coastal decision-makers. The Coastal Program's numerous partnerships work to identify and target coastal management issues as well as exploring alternative solutions to existing issues. This section also outlines the contribution of the MLSCP in the development of tools the State uses to increase efficiencies and further analysis of issues.

A. Successful Development and Implementation of the MLSCP

When the State began the process of developing a coastal zone management program in the early 1990's, it initiated an approach that would include local, state, and federal interests, build upon existing partnerships, and respond to public concerns. Facing a history of citizens' distrust of both the federal government in general, and specifically any further planning efforts mandated by a federal program, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) formed a plan to address these earlier concerns that resulted in the present program. Lessons learned from the first attempt to develop a program were included in the framework of the approved Coastal Program and resulted in greater collaboration, a sense of ownership, and well-earned trust among stakeholders.

The participation of groups representing local interests was a key step in the State's approach. Minnesota thus developed an organizational and implementation structure based on recommendations of both a State agency work group and a work group comprised of local leaders and technical experts. The formation of work groups, and the hiring of a program coordinator to facilitate them, built renewed trust in the process and led to the development of forums to discuss issues and create alternative solutions for implementation. These groups accepted the challenge of representing historical opinions, as well as working within the State's parameters to develop the MLSCP. The State's flexibility and openness during Program development was well received by coastal communities and local governments; gaining the support and trust of these groups has been fundamental to the successful implementation of the MLSCP.

Accomplishment: The State of Minnesota is commended on the approach it took to develop its Coastal Program, learning from its earlier experience and designing a successful collaboration among local, State, and Federal partners.

B. Governor's Council on the Lake Superior Coastal Program

The State's Coastal Program framework includes a group of citizens who actively participate in carrying out functions of MLSCP's grant selection and program guidance. The Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program is committed to providing support to local units of

government, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and agencies in addressing coastal management concerns. The Coastal Council is commended on its thorough review of project proposals and adherence to the mission of program autonomy in its grant selection process.

The Coastal Council provides valuable input into the Coastal Program and is at the core of a successful grant program. As representatives of the participating coastal communities, Council members reflect the issues and interests of local governments and community groups. Through discussions on grant proposals, projects representative of coastal community needs are selected and forwarded for final approval. These projects meet program requirements, are diverse, and address a variety of coastal issues.

Accomplishment: The MLSCP is commended on the development and successful implementation of the Coastal Council. It is at the core of the robust grant program and reflects the dedication and leadership of the State in its partnership at the local, state, and federal level in management of coastal resources.

It is apparent, however, that the different functions of the Coastal Council and the Coastal Program are not well understood by the public, or in some cases, the Council members themselves. The team sees the need to clarify the unique roles and responsibilities of each. This is understandably a difficult and delicate issue; however, NOAA believes the distinction should be made.

1) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to better describe and communicate the Coastal Council's roles and responsibilities within the framework of the Coastal Program as a whole.

In addition, NOAA found the current mechanism for resolving Coastal Council appointment vacancies lacking sufficient structure. Vacancies on the Council are not always filled in a timely fashion, which can compromise the strength and value of having a representative membership. With Council members' term limits staggered as they are, this will be an ongoing issue.

2) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to work with the State to develop a clear mechanism for promptly filling vacancies on the Coastal Council.

C. Engaging Coastal Communities

The mission of the MLSCP is to "preserve, protect, restore, and enhance coastal resources for present and future generations," and this is one of its priority categories for funding projects and programs through the CZMA. In the summer of each year, the Governor's Council for Minnesota's Coastal Program engages in priority setting discussions to target specific opportunities for the upcoming grant cycle.

Pass-through Grant Program

As determined during the development of the MLSCP, a majority of program funds are passed through to coastal communities. The Coastal Program has awarded over 200 grants to local communities that represent a balanced program of land use planning and development, public

access and recreational opportunities, coastal outreach and education, enhancement, protection and management of natural resources, and the preservation of historical and cultural resources. These grants have strengthened partnerships that benefit the State's coastal resources and position communities for increased involvement in the development of tools, educational programming, and projects to assist in coastal decision-making.

Each fall, grant-writing workshops are held in Duluth, Grand Marais, and Two Harbors, where staff provide guidance and pre-application information to applicants. These workshops are an efficient means to provide information to potential partners seeking funding opportunities in their community or organization. Participants, including local government officials, non-profit organizations and educational organizations, felt the process was extremely effective in providing guidance and technical expertise needed to develop projects that would benefit both the public and Minnesota's coastal resources.

The MLSCP also participates in the Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Grant Program. Great Lakes Coastal Restoration funds were available through the 106th Congressional appropriation of \$30,000,000 in late 2000 for pass-thru grant funding to state and local governments. Minnesota received \$1,938,000 in 2001 for the Great Lakes Restoration Grants. Thirteen projects received funding through a competitive grant process and are now underway.

The evaluation team was able to view some of the projects funded by the MLSCP through 306, 306a, Coastal Nonpoint and Great Lakes Coastal Restoration program grants from MLSCP during the site visit. Examples of these include:

- **The City of Duluth, Sargent Creek Restoration.**

With a \$450,000 grant from the Great Lakes Coastal Restoration Act, the MLSCP was able to leverage matching funds from the City, and the cooperation of the local sanitary district to waive tipping fees at the landfill, to carry out a \$1.1M cleanup of a superfund site along Sargent Creek. In all, 50,000 tons of solid and hazardous waste was removed from the stream, stream bank and adjoining ravine. The superfund site is now in the process of delisting and the surrounding land owned by St. Louis City may be used for residential development.

- **The City of Two Harbors.**

The City of Two Harbors has received CZMA funding to address a variety of coastal zone issues. Many grants have been for critical planning projects, including a synthesis of past planning efforts that the City completed in order to develop a vision for the future of the waterfront.

Two Harbors has used 306 and 306A funds to implement several forestry-related projects. For example, the City developed a much needed urban forest management plan with help from the MLSCP. When approved and implemented, a protective zoning ordinance proposed in the plan will result in improved storm water runoff, significantly benefiting Lake Superior water quality. Two Harbors also used CZMA funds for planning the Lake County Demonstration Forest, an area that contains over 600 acres of

forestland with recreational trails, cultural and historical artifacts. The Forest provides a location for educating schools and the general public on forestry management techniques.

Two Harbors has also been able to leverage funding from other sources in order to enhance CZMA-funded projects. One example is the development and implementation of a storm water management plan. The plan, funded by the MLSCP, identified erosion control structures which were subsequently installed through a partnership with Minnesota Department of Transportation. The resulting plan, and culvert installation along Skunk Creek, has significantly reduced impacts to the City of Two Harbor's water intake.

- **Gooseberry Falls State Park.**

The Gooseberry Falls State Park was able to use MLSCP funds and leverage resources to protect a heavily used area from further damage. The Park constructed a boardwalk along the Gooseberry River to provide public access along the lower falls, while preserving a highly eroded area containing old growth cedar.

Gooseberry Falls State Park also produced an eleven minute video about Lake Superior with Coastal Program funds. The video, shown to visitors in the Park theater, was also sent to all area schools and is available on loan. It is an excellent educational tool to increase understanding and appreciation of Lake Superior coastal resources, and has received rave reviews from everyone who has seen it.

- **City of Grand Marais and Cook County.**

The City of Grand Marais used CZMA funds to support several projects that enhance public access and educational opportunities along the shoreline. To begin with, the City used funds to design the public access, now known as Harbor Park, on the site of a former gas station. Also on the Harbor, the Cook County Historical Society partnered with the MLSCP to restore the Neegee, a historic fishing tugboat, and to create a replica of a Fish House. These cultural resources are an important part of a community focusing on the sustainable use of its coastal resources. Both projects illustrate the area's history and are thus used extensively in educational programming. School groups and the public have taken an active role in the Neegee restoration specifically, helping to repair and paint the old tugboat. MLSCP has also provided funds to facilitate educational programming through the North House Folk School. The School, which celebrates the culture of the north through classroom crafts and education, serves approximately 8500 students a year through more than 270 courses.

The City of Grand Marais has also developed a comprehensive storm water management plan with CZMA support. The plan addresses many major City concerns, such as flooding in the downtown after rainstorms, severe erosion issues, and sustainable water use. Using the plan as a guide, the City's storm water committee prioritized projects to improve the town's storm water management system and restore water quality. Having a plan and list of priority actions in place has also made it much easier for Grand Marais to develop and fund other storm water control efforts. An additional benefit of the plan

development process was that it provided a forum for the City and Cook County to work together to address issues in a way that had not occurred before.

These projects demonstrate the valuable contribution by the MLSCP in facilitating planning for preservation, protection, and enhancement of the natural and cultural resources that are vital to Minnesota's coastal communities.

Accomplishment: The MLSCP has forged strong partnerships at the local, state and national levels. Most notably, the Program has gained the trust of local communities and these relationships have resulted in a multitude of successful coastal projects.

STAR Grant Program

In addition to the annual funding cycle, the MLSCP sets aside \$40,000 from the cooperative grant agreement each year in order to operate a Short Term Action Request (STAR) grant program. These funds are made available throughout the year to applicants who have project requests of \$5000 or less with a 1:1 match, and the projects must take no more than six months to complete. Applications are reviewed at bi-monthly Coastal Council meetings. From all accounts, this has been a tremendously successful program that has allowed communities to take advantage of opportunities and address emerging issues without delay due to lengthy grant cycles.

Accomplishment: In response to the unique needs of Minnesota's coastal communities, the MLSCP has developed a highly successful Short Term Action Request grant program that complements the annual funding cycle by providing smaller grants more quickly to address emerging issues.

Outreach

Grants awarded by Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program have positively impacted the lives of residents in nearly every coastal community, from Duluth to Grand Portage, through projects including those that have increased public access, provided educational opportunities, and protected natural resources. How these grants further the mission of the Coastal Program, however, might not always be clear to the public. Connecting the successful projects with strategic goals of the MLSCP and the CZMA, and demonstrating the on-the-ground results to the many audiences along the North Shore, could be accomplished via a structured outreach component of the Program. Education and outreach activities, such as workshops, publications and website development, would help to illuminate the MLSCP's contribution to coastal management in the state. For example, a Program newsletter would be useful in explaining current coastal management issues to the public, and could highlight projects that have successfully addressed them.

3) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to develop and implement an education and outreach strategy that provides information on Program organization, priorities and activities.

Boundary Expansion

The MLSCP defines the coastal zone boundary as the nearest legal township along the shore, or approximately six miles inland. In the metropolitan area around Duluth it includes all of the cities of Duluth, Hermantown, Proctor, Carlton, Wrenshall, and all or parts of the adjacent townships. This area was determined to have the most significant impact on Lake Superior and its tributaries.

There has recently been discussion among Program partners around modifying the approved coastal zone boundary to include the Nemadji River Basin. This watershed is not currently included within the Program boundary as the Nemadji enters Lake Superior from the City of Superior, Wisconsin. The evaluation team was able to participate in some of these thought-provoking discussions during the site visit. NOAA thus believes that expanding the boundary further into Carlton County (the Nemadji River Basin) would allow the program not only to address issues in an important Lake Superior watershed, but also to participate in unique partnership opportunities with the neighboring Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. Such a boundary expansion proposal would need to be developed further in collaboration with Program partners.

4) Program Suggestion: The State of Minnesota is encouraged to work with local partners and OCRM to evaluate the need for, and to determine the best method of incorporating, possible boundary changes into the approved MLSCP.

D. Section 309 Enhancements: Geographical Information System Assistance

In order to address one of the recommendations in their Section 309 Strategy and Assessment, the MLSCP has been working diligently to provide comprehensive Geographical Information System (GIS) products and assistance to local governments to inform decision making. The Program's GIS specialist has been invaluable in these efforts, providing GIS and basic computer support to many small units of government. The Program is also coordinating resources to enhance these GIS assets, such as demonstrating multiple uses for products acquired through the grant program and delivering the products to users. One product, oblique aerial photography, was originally developed to monitor shoreline changes, but has also been used to locate potential bat caves, and to develop plans for hiking trails and the state highway 61 corridor. Local governments have used the GIS products and technical support during planning activities such as updating their comprehensive land use plans and revising local ordinances.

The GIS specialist also distributes and maintains the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources GIS data resource site (DRS) and provides training for DRS end users in the Coastal Program area. The DRS system was created by MN DNR staff, and is a place where GIS resources are stored and made available to users. DRS content includes a suite of custom MN DNR GIS software (Quick Themes for ArcView, DNR Tool Box for ArcView, LandView [a free GIS data viewer created by DNR], and DNR Garmin), but data present and geographic extent can be defined by the user. The GIS specialist finds the DRS system is easy to maintain, support, and redistribute, with most of the effort occurring at the first DRS install which requires users training. MLSCP was active in the development of LandView, and provided funding for Visual Basic training for DNR programmers.

MLSCP staff also work to reduce duplication of efforts in GIS data collection. Cooperation has been demonstrated in large-scale wetland mapping, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) and MLSCP. Staff successfully coordinated impervious surface mapping after receiving three grant proposals for the same project. Partners include the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Sea Grant, and NRRI.

Accomplishment: The MLSCP is commended for their development of a comprehensive GIS assistance program. Work by the GIS specialist has added much needed capacity for coastal communities, in terms of technical support, computing equipment and software, and has already greatly benefited Duluth, Crystal Bay and Tofte Townships, and Lake, Cook and Carlton Counties.

5) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to continue directing resources toward GIS capability in local governments, as well as towards the long term maintenance of GIS data for use in analysis and tracking of coastal management efforts.

E. The Lake Superior Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program

The MLSCP received conditional approval for its Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Plan in fall 2003. With six conditions to address, the Coastal Program has developed a productive and collaborative approach to gaining full program approval. The MLSCP is currently working with the state Pollution Control Agency and the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and with full support of the State's 319 Program, in order to address these conditions. Not waiting for full program approval, the Coastal Program is engaged in facilitating the implementation of the Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program through the 306/306A grants, educational programs, and encouraging the incorporation of nonpoint source pollution control planning into local planning.

Accomplishment: The State is commended on working proactively to address coastal nonpoint source pollution, while still working to achieve full program approval.

6) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to continue working towards full program approval.

F. Partnering with Minnesota Sea Grant

Minnesota Sea Grant, housed at the University of Minnesota, Duluth Campus, was instrumental in the development of the MLSCP and has remained a strong partner throughout Program implementation. Sea Grant has sought public input on how to further Coastal Program goals as part of a cooperative process, participating in local forums (including the annual State of the Coast conference) to gather input on issues and community needs. Using this information, Sea Grant has developed projects that are needs-driven and evenly distributed along the North Shore.

For example, Minnesota Sea Grant produced the educational program entitled, “A View from the Lake” with assistance from the MLSCP. Seasonal boat trips on board the research vessel L.L. Smith Jr. allow participants to experience the science used in coastal decision-making through hands-on demonstrations. One trip was specifically designed for local decision makers, another for natural resource professionals and educators and a third for the general public. Passengers take part in water quality sampling, plankton tows, mapping, and laboratory exercises to learn about the near shore environment. Lectures on board discuss the links between land use change and impacts on local resources such as water quality, recreational opportunities, and quality of life. How this information can be used in local decision-making is also discussed. Participation in this program is consistently high, and post-trip surveys indicate high retention and consideration of information provided by Sea Grant. Program staff provided technical support for this project last year, and will be contributing financial assistance in the coming summer(s).

Another Sea Grant program funded by MLSCP hosts regional and out-of-state speakers who present seminars in coastal communities. These seminar series, “Superior Science for You” (2003) and “Liquid Science” (2004), engage diverse audiences in relevant science topics. These series were also very well received and included web casting and conference proceedings as future resources.

Accomplishment: The MLSCP has developed a strong and successful partnership with the MN Sea Grant to provide innovative and accessible science education programs for the public.

During the review period, the MLSCP and Sea Grant also cooperated to provide leadership and financial assistance to the annual State of the Coast Conference. This conference brings together agency staff, local decision-makers and the general public to discuss the current and future social, environmental and economic conditions of the North Shore of Lake Superior. The 2004 conference focused on establishing a shared vision for the North Shore.

7) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is encouraged to continue to strengthen its relationship further with the MN Sea Grant by engaging in collaborative programs, such as the State of the Coast Conference, outside their current grantor-grantee partnership.

G. Partnering with the NOAA Coastal Services Center Coastal Fellowship Program

The MLSCP also participated in the NOAA Coastal Services Center (CSC) Coastal Management Fellowship Program during their first review period. This partnership has proved to be a valuable resource for the Coastal Program as staff benefited from the results of the project and additional staff resources. Administered by the CSC, the Fellowship Program matches host states with highly qualified and motivated, recent graduate students as part of the coastal program staff for two years. States decide on a project before the fellow is selected to better match recipients with on-the-job education and training opportunities.

Minnesota selected the project, “Improved decision-making through permit compliance and monitoring on Minnesota’s North Shore of Lake Superior.” Through this project, David Easter,

a graduate of Oregon State University, is developing a GIS-based database for lead agency DNR - Waters. The database contains spatial or map-based data used to locate permitted project sites and provides information related to each, including site characteristics, photos, and compliance data. Using the database, DNR is able to evaluate project compliance with the permit conditions. A review of the data collected thus far suggests that it is necessary to improve the monitoring of permitted projects during the construction phase to fully assess permit compliance. It often proved difficult to evaluate whether or not permit provisions, such as sediment erosion control measures employed during project construction, were complied with when site visits occurred subsequent to project completion.

The database can be viewed with ArcView software, and is easily accessible in the field via laptops and remote access equipment. This capability allows staff hydrologists to retrieve information on site if necessary, which improves decision-making throughout the permitting process. In addition, an analysis of the database demonstrates how digital records can easily be shared and exchanged among different agencies. Mr. Easter is currently drafting recommendations for how DNR can improve permit compliance, such as by clarifying the wording used in permit provisions and increasing communication with applicants before and during the construction process.

Accomplishment: The MLSCP is commended on its successful partnership with the NOAA CSC to address the important issue of permit compliance. Participation in the Fellowship Program has benefited the State by providing additional resources and new tools that will help to inform decision-makers throughout the permitting process.

H. Planning for the Future

Building on the successful first six years of the program, MLSCP efforts now need to be placed on planning for the next five years. A strategic planning process would allow for an assessment of the external and internal environment in consultation with the DNR, Coastal Council, NOAA, grant partners and the coastal community. A plan to identify emerging issues, relevant themes and action strategies to address those themes could then be implemented through its grant program and administration.

8) Program Suggestion: The MLSCP is strongly encouraged to develop a strategic plan, in coordination with internal and external customers, for the next five years of program implementation.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on OCRM's review of the federally approved Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program and the criteria at 15 CFR 928.5(a) (3), I find that the State of Minnesota is adhering to its federally approved coastal management program. Further advances in coastal management program implementation will occur as the State addresses the program suggestions contained herein.

These evaluation findings contain eight recommendations that are program suggestions that the State should consider before the next regularly scheduled program evaluation and which are not mandatory at this time.

This is a programmatic evaluation of the MLSCP that may have implications regarding the State's financial assistance award(s). However, it does not make any judgment on, or replace any financial audit(s) related to the allocability of any costs incurred.

16 May 2005

Date

signed Eldon Hout

Eldon Hout, Director

**MINNESOTA'S LAKE SUPERIOR COASTAL PROGRAM
CZMA SECTION 312 EVALUATION**

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**MINNESOTA'S LAKE SUPERIOR COASTAL PROGRAM
CZMA SECTION 312 EVALUATION**

WRITTEN COMMENT RECEIVED AND RESPONSE

Daniel W. Gilmore, Assistant Professor of Forest Resources at the University of Minnesota commended the MLSCP as knowledgeable, courteous, and helpful in response to questions regarding the NOAA program. In addition, he wrote that the MLSCP excels at encouraging the development of partnerships between local communities, state and federal agencies, and the University of Minnesota.

NOAA thanks Mr. Gilmore for his input.