

21st International Conference of The Coastal Society

Beach and Inlet Management in North Carolina: Assessing the Needs of Local Beach Communities

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Currently, no comprehensive overview of beach and inlet management and planning in the U.S. exists in the literature. Therefore, a literature review was conducted in order to identify which states have or are in the process of developing statewide or local beach and inlet management plan; better understand the content, structure, and effectiveness of these plans; and identify research needs related to beach and inlet management. Of the 95 documents reviewed, 23 were existing state or local management plans; 16 were proposed beach management strategies; 23 were articles that analyzed beach management strategies; six were legal policies or legislation related to beach management; two were beach or inlet ecosystem descriptions; and one was a commentary. These data suggest that only one state has a formal, statewide beach and inlet management plan (FL); however, several states have programs, plans or legislation similar to a statewide beach and inlet management plan (CA, SC, TX, and WA). At least three states are currently pursuing beach and inlet management plans (HI, NC, ME); and many states have beach and inlet management plans for localized areas or regions (AL, CA, DE, GA, HI, ME, MA, OR, TX, VA). Increasingly, regional beach and inlet management is incorporating process-based, systems-wide strategies in lieu of what historically has been a project-by-project, piecemeal approach. The paucity of literature on the effectiveness of this more holistic management approach may be indicative of its recent emergence or a lack of resources to support implementation, monitoring, analysis, and reporting.

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