

20 Counties Join In Coastal Area Management Act For about three years w

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For about three years we have been hearing about N. C. Coastal Area Management—for the first few months it was a hotly debated bill before the state legislature, now it is a program in effect in 20 Eastern North Carllina counties, still hotly debated in some quarters.

What is it?

It is a unique program jointly sponsored by local government, federal and state agencies to plan for the future development of the coast and to manage the more delicate natural resources. The bulk of the funding comes from the federal government, coordination is supplied by the state, and most decisionmaking is done at the local level. North Carolina is not alone in its efforts; in all, 30 states and three U.S. territories are involved in some form of coastal area management.

Why did North Carolina

establish the program? Because the General Assembly determined that severe pressures are being placed on the coastal area which threaten to destroy the very features of the area that make it attractive and productive.

How does Coastal

Area Management help? In three ways: land use plans have already been prepared and adopted by nearly every county and large community in the coastal area to serve as blueprints for the wise use of land and the efficient use of tax dollars for public services; environmentally fragile areas which will be known as Areas of Environmental Concern are being studied and selected and a determination will be made as to the best way to develop them without unnecessary cost to the public, and the overall system of permits governing many coastal development activities is being examined to uncover how it can be simplified and made more efficient.

Who is in charge? The program is being carried out by the Coastal Resources Commission, a 15-member citizens board nominated by local governments in the coastal counties to serve four year terms on a staggered basis. They establish standards, review and approve land use plans, study and select Areas of Environmental Concern as well as appropriate management tools to protect them, and they directing are the examination of the existing permit system. The commission relies heavily on the Coastal **Resources Advisory Council** for liaison with local government and assistance with policy development. The council is a 47-member board composed mainly of local government representatives with a few delegates from the state agencies which operate programs within the coastal area. The Coastal Area Management News column will appear regularly in this and other newspapers in the coastal area to keep you informed of the progress and problems encountered by the program. If you have specific questions about the intent of the program or the methods selected by the Commission to implement the program please send them to Editor, Coastal Area Management News, 3143 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington, N. C. 28416. Indicate your permission for us to use your question in the column.

