Theme 1 Governance

Collaborative policy-making and planning in the coastal zone

There are serious policy and planning implications for Australian coastal communities resulting from existing coastal pressures and the new pressures of climate change. Low-lying and erosion-prone coastal areas are more vulnerable to sea-level rise. Social disadvantage can worsen coastal vulnerability in regional areas. New sea-level policies tend to relate to new developments, leaving existing ecosystems and old infrastructure without adaptive plans.

> *Coastal governance is the set of processes and institutional arrangements through which decision makers and stakeholders influence actions and outcomes on the coast.*

Port Geographe, Geographe Bay, WA. Image: L. Stocker

Erosion at South Beach, WA. Image: L. Stocker

The challenge for coastal governance is to:

- engage coastal stakeholders in a shared understanding of climate change on the coast and opportunities for adaptation

- enable broad, meaningful participation in knowledge-based governance of the coast in a rapidly changing context

- plan for long term impacts of climate change while at the same time having short cycles of review that allow new information to be considered and acted on as it becomes available

Led by Curtin University, Theme 1 explores how governance can best respond to climate change and adapt to coastal impacts such as sea level rise.

Winter Storm at Cottesloe, WA. Image: L. Stocker

Aims

The research aims to:

- investigate features of current systems of coastal governance and planning

- identify constraints to effective engagement of governance systems with relevant knowledge bases

- investigate how systems of coastal governance can become more reflexive and open to knowledge through engaging stakeholders and decision-makers in an adaptive learning process

- collaboratively develop future pathways in coastal policy and planning

Google Earth Participatory Mapping Workshop with Rottnest Island Authority, WA. Image: G. Burke.

Design and Methods

The Governance theme uses deliberative techniques such as Google Earth participatory mapping, scientific visualisations, and scenario planning to generate future governance pathways.

Key Outputs

- A variety of tools and guidelines including: generic coastal sustainability strategy, scenario planning tool, governance analysis tool, Indigenous coastal website guidelines, Google Earth participatory mapping guidelines and a resources database.

- 'Sustainable Coastal Management and Climate Adaptation: Lessons from Regional Approaches in Australia' – an edited book (Kenchington, R., Stocker, L. & Wood, D. eds) with chapters by theme leaders from the Coastal Collaboration Cluster.

- Articles and videos on coastal adaptation.

Research to date suggests that good governance for coastal adaptation:

> is a long term strategic process with sustainability goals and visions

> is relational, reflexive and adaptive

> is participatory, engaging all stakeholders and the broad community

> works with social and cultural values and local contexts

> uses front runners and champions

> uses boundary agents and boundary organisations to span the knowledge-governance interface

> learns continually using the best available evidence

> is a complex adaptive system including both ecological and social aspects.

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