

Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration

Objective

Establish and implement an integrated ecosystem protection and restoration strategy that is science-based and aligns conservation and restoration goals at the Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional levels.

Why Do This?

Essential coastal and the Great Lakes habitats continue to suffer significant losses and degradation due to coastal development, sea-level rise, and associated human activities, as well as external stressors such as invasive species and climate change. Critical habitat loss and degradation of ecosystem services is apparent in many regions. Addressing challenges that cross jurisdictional boundaries and sectors on a regional and ecosystem scale will lead to more effective resource management.

Potential Actions and Expected Outcomes

- **Support Shared Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration Priorities** – Aligning Federal resources in three regions will improve our ability to protect and restore regional ecosystems.
- **Strengthen Conservation Partnerships** – This will bring together Federal and non-Federal expertise, strengths, and resources to increase support for the protection and restoration of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes habitats that provide the ecosystem services.
- **Reduce Coastal Wetland Loss** – To address the alarming loss of coastal wetlands, Federal agencies will assess their causes. The findings will result in recommendations that will help Federal agencies take actions to reverse wetland losses.
- **Develop Carbon-based Incentives for Coastal Habitat Conservation** – A protocol will be developed and policy options explored for incorporating the carbon sequestration value of coastal habitats into Federal decision-making.
- **Ensure Full Mitigation for Injuries to Coral Reef Ecosystems** – Establishing standard protocols for coral reef ecosystem assessment and mitigation among the four Federal agencies responsible for coral reef protection, restoration, and regulation.
- **Reduce the Threat of Marine Invasive Species** – Federal agencies will coordinate planning to control marine invasive species and the resulting impacts to marine ecosystems, beginning with the Indo-Pacific lionfish.
- **Protect Nationally Significant Marine and Great Lakes Aquatic Areas** – Federal agencies will work with non-Federal partners to develop a process to identify marine areas that are ecologically important and nationally significant, and recommend the appropriate levels of protection.
- **Improve the Effectiveness of Project Monitoring and Tracking** - Federal agencies will adopt the monitoring protocols in the *Estuary Restoration Act of 2000* and add estuary restoration project information into the National Estuaries Restoration Inventory.