Digital Coast

www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Digital Coast?

The Digital Coast is a web-based, ever-expanding collection of data, tools, trainings, and stories from the field, and a partnership, designed to support coastal managers and technicians across the U.S. While the Digital Coast was developed and is currently maintained by the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, hundreds of organizations and federal, state, and local agencies have contributed content. This resource is a first stop for the nation's coastal management community.

What makes the Digital Coast unique?

The Digital Coast is a curated collection of high-quality, authoritative data and tools focused on coastal and ocean issues and directed at decision makers, practitioners, and technicians. "More than Just Data" is the slogan because data alone is not enough, especially when the users of that data do not know how it can be used, or what steps to take to get the information that they need. Digital Coast tools and training help users turn data into powerful information that continues to increase the knowledge—the coastal intelligence—of our nation.

What is the Digital Coast Partnership?

The Digital Coast Partnership is a group of eight national organizations that work with NOAA to ensure coastal managers have the relevant data, tools, and information they need to make informed decisions about our nation's coastal resources.

Beyond ensuring that critical informational resources are available via the Digital Coast website, this partnership also works to unify groups that might not otherwise work together. The partnership supports events such as conferences, webinars, workshops, and meetings to give coastal professionals a forum to learn and collaborate on key coastal issues. These issues include coastal resilience, ocean planning, and protecting and mapping coastal habitats. As a result, a strong alliance of coastal professionals is being established and nurtured.

The Digital Coast Partnership includes these organizations:
- American Planning Association
- Association of State Floodplain Managers
- Coastal States Organization
- National Association of Counties
- National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
- National States Geographic Information Council
- The Nature Conservancy
- Urban Land Institute
- NOAA

How does the Digital Coast differ from other federal efforts, such as Data.gov?
The main difference is the volume and type of content found on the sites. Data.gov is a federal website where a wide range of federal data is housed. Data.gov's main purpose is to give access to data, but it is up to the user to ensure that the data they discover are high quality and meet the needs of their issue.

Digital Coast is focused on national data in the coastal watersheds. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management has also taken the step to ensure that Digital Coast users can easily find authoritative, high-quality data, tools, and training resources that allow for a more productive user experience to more directly help managers address complex coastal issues.

Why does the Digital Coast serve other agencies' data? Isn't that redundant?
Digital Coast is a platform for readily available coastal data and web-mapping services. Most users don't have the time or desire to search a vast array of sites to gather relevant data bit by bit. Compiling the most data sets for coastal managers from various agencies with one point of access saves users valuable time. Additionally, Digital Coast multiplies its impact on regional and state coastal management efforts not by duplication, but by the very nature of a "make once and use many times" architecture structure. Surveys and the Digital Coast return on investment study have shown that by providing information in this manner, Digital Coast saves coastal managers and technicians one of their most valuable resources—time.

In some cases, Digital Coast serves and extends data-hosting services to government agencies that don't have the resources or mission to present their data. It is "win-win" for the entire community.

What can the Digital Coast do for me?
The wealth and variety of data and tools currently available to coastal managers would have been hard to imagine only a few years ago. Today, finding the data or knowing which tool or approach to use can be overwhelming. The Digital Coast provides an intuitive platform for accessing curated coastal data, tools, and additional resources, and a training academy helps users understand how to use these powerful resources.

What do you have for my county, town, or area?
A number of products in the Digital Coast have placed-based information, which makes it easier to find localized data. Coastal County Snapshots and the Land Cover Atlas, available through the Tools section, provide county-level information and reports. The Data Access Viewer and Data Registry allow users to search for data in a specific geography. The Stories from the Field section provides examples of how coastal managers apply geospatial information to various management issues. The Digital Coast Academy provides a range of opportunities for instructor-led and online, on-demand learning. Finally, the MarineCadastre.gov National Viewer allows for quick viewing of offshore regions.

Can Digital Coast help me use tools and data in my work?
The Digital Coast Academy offers over a dozen instructor-led training courses available for classroom and online delivery. Additional self-guided resources such as online modules, case studies, quick references, and videos are available on demand. Coastal managers can use these on-demand resources to learn and build skills right when they need them – in the context of their work.

Some resources build participants' technical skills for working with the data and tools provided, and others build capacity for priority coastal topics or the people side of coastal management, including integrating natural and social science into projects and decision-making. With the academy's resources, coastal audiences can learn how to apply Digital Coast information integrated with sound coastal management processes. Building technical, process, and topical capacity enables coastal practitioners to work better and smarter.

Can you provide examples of Digital Coast content?
In addition to the academy, there are several sections within Digital Coast that illustrate how Digital Coast resources are being used to address coastal issues.

- Topics – This section provides quick links to the top Digital Coast holdings that communities use to address common coastal management issues.
- Stories from the Field – See how communities throughout the coastal zone use Digital Coast products.

Check out the GeoZone Blog for answers to technical questions, post your question on one of our social media channels, Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram or send an email inquiry to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov.

What are the future plans?
Digital Coast continues to evolve to meet user needs. The NOAA Office for Coastal Management is continuing to incorporate more content and is working with constituent groups to understand additional information needs and skill gaps, as well as share additional examples of how existing information is being used. Future efforts include helping other groups expand the reach of their data by inclusion in the Digital Coast and expanding the use of their data through web services format. Digital Coast Academy will continue to develop and refine learning resources, including progressive learning on high-demand topics and self-guided training modules to support users' application of the tools and data offered.

How can I get involved in the Digital Coast?
A popular section of the Digital Coast highlights stories about how users have addressed coastal management issues using geospatial data, tools, and information. If you have a case study to share, send an e-mail to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov. We try to respond to all inquiries and suggestions within two business days.

Still have questions?
You can send questions directly to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov where you can expect a reply within two business days. And if you don't find what you're looking for on our site, let us know. Technical questions often end up being blog posts, so look there for information too.