

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. and its territories. While the Digital Coast was developed and is currently maintained by NOAA's 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, tools, and learning products focused on coastal and ocean issues and directed at decision-makers, practitioners, and technicians. "More than 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 needed information. Digital Coast tools and trainings help users turn data into powerful information that continues to increase the knowledge—the coastal intelligence—of our nation.

Is the Digital Coast an authorized government program?

Yes, the Digital Coast is authorized by the Digital Coast Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1467. The Act codifies the Digital Coast approach and shows congressional support, which paves a path to an even bigger and better Digital Coast effort. Specific requirements in the legislation include: (1) filling data information gaps, including coastal elevation, land use and land cover, critical infrastructure, socioeconomic and human use, structures, living resources and habitat, cadastral, and aerial imagery; (2) developing publicly available tools that integrate various data products, including marine economy data, to help communities make the right decisions; and (3) documenting best practices in product and service delivery for other federal agencies interested in the Digital Coast approach.

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 needed 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 local projects and 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, risk management, ocean planning, and coastal habitat mapping and protection. As a result, a strong alliance of coastal professionals is thriving across the country.

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. Digital Coast is focused on national data in the coastal watersheds. NOAA's 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 directly help managers address complex coastal issues.

Data.gov is the federal government's open data repository as required by the OPEN Government Data Act. Specifically, it uses metadata (over 300,000 records) to direct users to authoritative datasets that sit within federal agencies.

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 best datasets 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?

Many products in the Digital Coast have place-based information, which makes it easier to find localized data. For example, the [Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper](#) and [Land Cover Atlas](#), available through the [Tools section](#), provide county-level information and reports. The [Data section](#) and [Data Access Viewer](#) 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, several sections within Digital Coast 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](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#), or send an email inquiry to Coastal.Info@noaa.gov.

What are the future plans?

Digital Coast continues to evolve to meet user needs. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management is continuing to incorporate more content and is working with constituent groups and our federal and state partners 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 a web services format. The Digital Coast Academy will continue to develop and refine learning resources, including products focused 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.