

No Net Loss of Ecological Function and Restoration

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The concept of no net loss of shoreline ecological functions is rooted in the Shoreline Management Act and in the goals, policies, and governing principles of the state's shoreline guidelines.

The Act states:

“Permitted uses in the shoreline shall be designed and conducted in a manner that minimizes insofar as practical, any resultant damage to the ecology and environment of the shoreline area.”

It is not enough to simply prevent further loss of ecological functions, master programs provisions must also

“...achieve overall improvements in shoreline ecological functions over time when compared to the status upon adoption of the master program.”

Protecting Ecological Function

According to the governing principles of the guidelines, protection of shoreline ecological functions are accomplished through the following:

- Meaningful understanding of current shoreline ecological conditions
- Regulations and mitigation standards that ensure that permitted developments do not cause net loss of ecological functions
- Regulations that ensure exempt developments do not result in net loss of ecological functions
- Goals and policies for restoring ecologically impaired shorelines
- Regulations and programs that fairly allocate the burden of mitigating cumulative impacts among development opportunities
- Incentives and voluntary measures designed to restore and protect ecological functions

The mandate to improve functions over time provides the basis for restoration planning and creates a distinction between mitigation and restoration in the context of the Act.

Two Distinct Objectives: No-Net Loss of Shoreline Ecological Functions and Restoration Over Time

