

Toward improved sediment management and coastal resilience through efficient permitting in California

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ABSTRACT

The value of sediment for helping coastal habitats and infrastructure respond to sea level rise is widely recognized. Across the country, coastal managers are seeking ways to beneficially use sediment sourced from dredging and other projects to counter coastal erosion and protect coastal resources. However, these projects are difficult to permit and have been slow to actualize. This paper draws on interviews with sediment managers and regulators in California to explore the challenges and opportunities for habitat restoration and beach nourishment within the current permitting regime. We find that permits are costly, difficult to obtain, and sometimes stand as a barrier to more sustainable and adaptive sediment management. We next characterize streamlining approaches and describe entities and ongoing efforts within California that apply them. Finally, we conclude that to keep pace with coastal losses due to climate change impacts, efforts toward efficient permitting must be accelerated and approaches diversified to support coastal resilience practices state-wide, in a timeframe that will allow coastal managers to innovate and adapt.

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