



Integrated Coastal Zone Management

Imagine a narrow strip of flat mud stretching approximately 459 km in length and 26 to 77 kilometers wide, extending from the Corentyne River in the east to the Venezuelan border in the northwest. Now imagine a place where vast ecosystems are swallowed up whole by a much larger ecosystem. Providing a heaven for not just the many flora and fauna found there, but approximately 90% of



the country's population to work and play. This is the Coastline of Guyana. Guyana's Coast has demonstrated that size doesn't really matter and seemly small it might be, it has and will continue to play a major role in the country's development. The Coast provides arable land making it suitable for agriculture, the country's main administrative buildings and a hub for social activities. A rich Colonial history of the British, Dutch and French dating back to the 19th century still lingers.

Many might say all these products and services provided by the coast makes it worth protecting, however, the vulnerable nature of this area makes it even more fragile. Its geographic position makes it open to both natural and man-made disasters such as floods as a result of rising sea levels, or extreme drought as a result of increasing temperatures. The question is 'How can conservation and protection of the Guyana's Coastal Zone be effectively achieved?' One plausible solution is Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

What is integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)?

Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) is a process for the management of the coast using an integrated approach, regarding all aspects of the coastal zone, including geographical and political boundaries, in an attempt to achieve sustainability. ICZM is still a relatively new and evolving concept; nevertheless there are some agreed general principles for ICZM. These integration principles were developed as a tool to pursue Sustainable Development in coastal zones, which requires *"new approaches to marine and coastal area management and development at the national,*

sub-regional, regional and global levels, approaches that are integrated in content and are precautionary and anticipatory in ambit" Agenda 21, 17.1, 1992

Integration can be seen as one of the tools or methodologies for realising the goal of holism - ideally meaning that all aspects of an issue or consequences of a decision are considered (natural sciences, economic, socio-cultural, legal, institutional questions, etc.).

Who is responsible for Coastal Zone Management in Guyana?

No one particular entity or organisation is responsible for managing Guyana's Coast. When dealing with Integrated Coastal Zone Management it is important to note that a holistic and a multi-disciplinary approach must be taken to achieve maximum benefits. Different dimensions of integration are also needed, for example, between sectors, between Governments and even nations since Guyana shares coastal waters with other nations. Some of these entities/organisations responsible for ICZM in Guyana are:

- Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment;
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Guyana Forestry Commission;
- Ministry of Public Works, Sea Defense Division;
- National Drainage and Irrigation Authority;
- River and Sea Defense;
- Guyana Lands and Survey Commission;
- Ministry of Housing and Water;
- Hydromet Service;
- University of Guyana; and
- NGO's, Community based groups, Environmental Clubs and other relevant government agencies.



How can I play a role in ICZM?

As mentioned earlier everyone has a role to play in managing the Coastline regardless of how small we might think it is. The environment doesn't have a voice, so you have to be the voice that speaks positive for the environment. Here are some simple things you can do to play a role in ICZM:

- Do not cut down Mangroves and advise others to do the same - mangrove is a natural form of sea defense and the first line of protection from the sea and water intrusion. It is also home for a wide range of biodiversity.
- Protect our marine life like the sea turtles. They have an important role to play in the cycle of life.

- Do Not Litter or dump litter on beaches or seashores or anywhere.
- Join an Environmental Club or Community - based Club - this will broaden your knowledge and scope on environmental issues and help you to be a part of environmentally sound activities like clean up campaigns and beautification programs. Encourage family and friends to do the same.

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN; or email us at eit.epaguyana@gmail.com.