



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

March 2002

Dear Reader:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Water and Office of Research and Development are pleased to present this first-ever environmental report card on the nation's coastal waters. This *Report* was prepared to help decision-makers manage coastal resources and increase public awareness of the condition of coastal waters. While the data for this *Report* is from many and varied programs with differing purposes, it provides baseline estimates of coastal conditions for select coastal regions and enables trend analyses as well as the identification of data gaps. The findings in this *Report* will also serve to monitor the progress of coastal programs as EPA continues to assess the condition of coastal waters and publish additional reports.

The *Report* primarily evaluates estuaries, areas where rivers meet the ocean, in the continental United States. Seven indicators were evaluated to assess the overall condition of the nation's coasts. These indicators were consolidated from many environmental measures and include: water clarity; dissolved oxygen; fish tissue contaminants; eutrophic condition; sediment contamination; benthic condition; and coastal wetlands loss. Based on these indicators, the *Report* describes the nation's coastal waters as ranging from fair to poor. Its intent was not to determine the causes of coastal water quality impairment. However, it does identify pathogens and oxygen-depleting substances from point and nonpoint urban runoff as stressors.

Although the *National Coastal Condition Report* is being released by EPA, it is the result of a collaboration between EPA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Interior, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture with contributions by numerous other federal, state, and tribal organizations. This *Report* demonstrates the value of forging close scientific collaboration among federal, state and other organizations. We hope this *Report* will help you understand more about U.S. coastal waters and encourage further efforts to protect these national treasures.

For more information on EPA's coastal program contact Barry Burgan at EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds at 202-566-1242. Contact Kevin Summers at EPA's Office of Research and Development at 850-934-9244 for more information on EPA's coastal research efforts. An electronic copy of the *National Coastal Condition Report* can be found at EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/oceans/nccr/index.html>. Copies of the *Report* are available by calling 800-490-9198.



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