

be one of the biggest ocean resource issues—the decline of fisheries stocks. In the Florida Keys NMS, fisheries replenishment zones have been proposed where fishing would be restricted to protect fish populations in the area. This proposal is controversial and may or may not be implemented.

Third, the NMS program faces the challenge of integrating the demands of many governmental and private interests, a formidable job for small NMS staffs. Nevertheless, progress is being made. The statute calls for state governments to review federal regulations and management programs when state-owned waters are involved (which is almost always the case). In some cases (e.g., Florida Keys NMS), federal and state officials “co-manage” sanctuary resources. The emergence of sanctuary advisory committees at some NMSs has brought private and local government interests into the management process.

Perhaps the most difficult task of integration is among federal agencies. For example, a sanctuary manager may need to coordinate with adjacent national park managers regarding visitation rules with the Federal Aviation Administration regarding flight restrictions, with the U.S. Navy regarding restrictions on naval operations, with the U.S. Coast Guard regarding reporting vessel activity or other navigational issues, and with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding fishing restrictions and marine mammal protection.

The NMS program offers many opportunities for improving governance. Although the primary objective of the sanctuaries program is to protect exceptionally valuable marine resources, the process could be used as a model for improving management and governance beyond the sanctuary boundaries.

### **National Estuary Program**

An estuary is a coastal area where fresh water from rivers and streams mixes with salt water from the ocean. Many bays, sounds, and lagoons are estuaries. Estuaries provide safe spawning grounds and nurseries and are critical for fish, birds, and other wildlife.

Congress established the NEP (National Estuary Program) as part of the Clean Water Act to protect and restore estuaries while supporting economic and recreational opportunities. The EPA designates local NEPs to develop partnerships among the government agencies that oversee estuarine resources and the people who depend on those resources for their livelihood and quality of life. Through a consensus-based process, stakeholders work together to develop a plan of action that meets the needs of their own communities. To date, 28 local NEPs have found practical and innovative ways to revitalize and protect their estuaries.

The 28 estuary programs listed in Box 2-2 are in various stages of development. Some are developing management plans; others are already implementing management plans. Currently, 10 programs are implementing management plans, ranging from habitat restoration to septic tank conversion. The key element of all local NEPs is public involvement (EPA 1995). Under the NEP, the administrator