

Board Action Version of February 21, 2009

The Board is recommending that the current CZM position be replaced with the following.

Proposals for a new Coastal Zone Management Position for LWVAL

Recognizing its particular environmental issues and the unique value of the Alabama Gulf Coast to the state, LWVAL supports increased attention to identifying adverse impacts on the coast by the ecosystems of the entire state and establishment of regulations and enforcement mechanisms to prevent or to mitigate those impacts. LWVAL also sees the need for new assessments of coastal conditions and new regulations to address problems, including those caused or revealed by storms and development, in order to secure the future ecological health of the region in the face of the increased growth in coastal communities.

I. Standards and guidelines to protect the coastal ecosystem should be developed and periodically revised, based on the latest scientific research and methodology, and adjusted to specific coastal needs. Enforcement standards should include stiff penalties for infractions, repeated failures, and negligence. These coastal standards and guidelines should address the following:

A. Water quality regulation should protect sources of drinking water, prevent polluted runoff, manage storm water, and mandate the best methodology for sewage treatment and management. State and local regulations should meet or exceed Federal Clean Water Act requirements.

B. Natural features that serve as defenses against hurricane winds and saltwater surges should be protected, including dunes, barrier islands, bays, estuaries, grass beds, and wetlands.

C. The Gulf of Mexico should be protected as a viable habitat for marine life by paying special attention to natural flow patterns and outflows from bays and rivers and assessing the detrimental effects of human activity.

D. The quality and quantity of estuarine waters flowing through wetlands needs to be adequate to support the bio-regeneration of life that takes place there.

E. Quality of life and features of natural worth, such as the coastal causeway, coastal forests, Mobile Bay, the dunes, wetlands, state parks and wildlife habitats should be preserved and kept vital and healthy. Public access to beaches and navigable waterways should be ensured.

F. Special protections should be considered for especially sensitive water bodies that impact coastal ecosystems.

II. Environmental impacts should be considered and regulated for rebuilding and new development on the coast and for every new coastal enterprise that could adversely affect the coastal environment or ecosystems. At minimum, such actions should include:

- A. Comprehensive land use planning that will protect the coastal environment to ensure health, safety, and quality of life.
- B. Coordination of planning for municipalities and for unincorporated areas.
- C. The identification, mapping and protection of fragile areas.
- D. Regulations to control adverse environmental impacts related to construction and to limit any preventable sediment accumulation, in addition to addressing the protections listed above.

III. LWVAL supports reform of the present state and local regulatory and enforcement systems for environmental standards on the coast to encourage, facilitate, and enforce public and private cooperative efforts across political boundaries, including the possible creation of one or more regional authorities with enforcement powers. Structural changes should separate licensing from enforcement and from administration of rules and regulations to ensure accountability.