

# **THE CAEN DECLARATION**

## **Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas EMECS 7 / ECSA 40 *May 12, 2006***

### **Our Shared Responsibility**

On May 9 through 12, 2006, 350 persons from 25 countries have convened in CAEN, France, for the Seventh International Conference for Environmental Management of Enclosed Coastal Seas, EMECS 7. We, the participants, include research scientists, government officials, policy makers, program managers, business persons, citizens from non-governmental organizations, teachers and environmental educators, and students from middle school through post-graduate levels. We have been convened through a collaboration between the Groupe d'Etude des Milieux Estuariens et Littoraux (GEMEL), working with many additional French and international institutions and organizations, and the International EMECS Center in Kobe, Japan. We are deeply grateful for this opportunity to meet in the beautiful city of Caen under the theme, "Sustainable Co-Development of Enclosed Coastal Seas: Our Shared Responsibility." This declaration is the result of our discussions.

"Our Shared Responsibility" consists of three words and three important levels of meaning. "Our" is global in scope. It goes beyond this conference, beyond EMECS and its collaborating organizations themselves to include all people around the globe who live on the world's coastal seas and the lands that comprise their watersheds. These systems are working landscapes that make coastal seas the bases of economy, culture, environment, and life. Human endeavors have developed as part of, not separate from, the world's coastal seas. "Our" future depends on the future of these working landscapes: water quality, economic productivity, recreational opportunity, and aesthetic pleasure.

"Shared" implies linkages. At the global level, these linkages are mutual between the people and working landscapes of the world's coastal seas. But there are other levels as well: linkages between each coastal sea and its watershed, between economy and environment, between people and quality of life. At a more practical level, there are linkages between citizens and government, study and action, education and commitment. We are especially concerned that the linkage between science and policy be strengthened so that the results of knowledge are more quickly and effectively translated into the most effective environmental policy possible. "Shared" also refers to a level within science itself to include linkages between natural scientists and economists, social scientists, educators, and the creative arts. Finally, "Shared" implies free access to information by everyone, from citizens to government officials, who is involved in the future of the world's coastal seas.

"Responsibility" integrates the two other words. The future of the world's coastal seas as working landscapes is clearly "Our" concern "Shared" through multiple linkages that integrate people into these working landscapes. But there are also global, regional, national, and local

levels of “Responsibility.” While each of these levels may be distinct in practice, the boundaries are artificial. “Our Shared Responsibility” conveys the meaning of erasing these boundaries so that information crosses more freely in all directions. These levels can represent members of a team: while each has a specific role and position as a player, the team will not succeed if the players do not work well together. Environmental policy can be implemented at each level, but there will be no victory unless all levels communicate and collaborate.

At EMECS 7 we heard reports of the devastation of the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia in December 2004. We also learned of other instances where declining water quality and depletion of living resources through habitat destruction were seriously threatening the economies and well-being of other coastal communities. We must never forget that people suffer directly as a result of mis-management of “Our” coastal seas. At the same time, we are heartened by reports of assistance and relief brought to these people by citizens from local, regional, national, and international communities. These efforts demonstrate that “Our Shared Responsibility” is more than just three words and more than just a wish. As a global team, we can work together to make good things happen.

The declarations issued from previous EMECS conferences have included specific actions that need to be taken to improve environmental management on the world’s coastal seas. We wholeheartedly endorse each of those recommendations as parts of a blueprint for now and in the future. Some of these recommendations, such as the reduction on point- and non-point nutrient pollution that are components of so many programs around the world, are reactions against factors that are clear threats to coastal seas and their irreplaceable living resources. In this declaration we wish to be pro-active, encouraging activities and trends that are consistent with previous recommendations by recognizing them as vital parts of “Our Shared Responsibility.” Our recommendations are as follows:

- Advances in knowledge and in technology have given scientists a wealth of new information on how the working landscapes that are coastal seas function. Now more than ever we encourage scientists to communicate that information to policy makers and citizens alike so that each of us is able to carry out “Our Shared Responsibility” more effectively.
- Sharing technical information beyond researchers and academicians requires translation into terms that can be understood by others. We strongly endorse the roles that environmental educators and NGO’s continue to play as information translators for our young people and concerned citizens. EMECS has an increasingly important role to play as an information translator, not only through Internet-based networking activities, but also as a catalyst that brings people together from all disciplines and endeavors to realize “Our Shared Responsibility.” We also encourage EMECS to assume a leadership role in making the findings from its conferences and workshops more widely available.
- “Responsibility” at the local level is often overlooked by governments and organizations eager to address regional, national, and even global problems on “Our” coastal seas. This top-down approach has proven to be important to coastal seas management, but a lack of community involvement makes it difficult to continue such programs over many years.

We encourage the continued development of bottom-up, community-based programs where local leaders and the citizens themselves are better prepared to actively support and participate in programs as part of “Our Shared Responsibility.”

- The EMECS 6 Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, introduced the EMECS Students and Schools Partnership. At EMECS 7 more than 50 students and their teachers have contributed through posters, formal presentations, open discussions in a Special Session, and as hosts during a field excursion. This is a superb initiative that effectively brings together all levels and meanings of “Our Shared Responsibility.” We endorse the Schools and Students Partnership with all “Our” hearts. We thank those dedicated students and educators who are contributing so wisely and thoughtfully to EMECS.
- The history of EMECS as well as the distribution of the world’s inhabitable lands have established a focus on coastal seas of the Northern Hemisphere. For “Our Shared Responsibility” to be truly global in meaning, EMECS needs to pursue initiatives that reach out to the Southern Hemisphere: to Africa, Australia, and South America. By this declaration we applaud such efforts and extend an invitation to colleagues at all levels on these continents to join us as full players on “Our” global team.

A working landscape is one that can be passed from one generation to the next as an asset, not a burden. The young people in the EMECS 7 Students and Schools Partnership do not want to inherit coastal seas that they will be challenged to restore rather than enjoy. They are asking for help. There would be no greater measure of success than for us to be able to satisfy their request. We conclude The Caen Declaration by affirming that a commitment to the next generation is the single most important endeavor we can undertake. This is truly the ultimate goal for realizing the importance of “Our Shared Responsibility” to the future of the world’s enclosed coastal seas.

Caen, France  
May 12, 2006