

## **A Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS)**

***K. L. Goodin<sup>1</sup>, R. J. Allee<sup>2</sup>, G. Cicchetti<sup>3</sup>, M. A Finkbeiner<sup>2</sup>, L. R. Handley<sup>5</sup>, C. J. Madden<sup>1</sup> and G. F. Mayer<sup>4</sup>***

<sup>1</sup>NatureServe, Rosslyn, VA, USA

<sup>2</sup>NOAA, National Ocean Service, Coastal Services Center, Charleston, SC, USA

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Atlantic Ecology Division, Narragansett, RI, USA

<sup>4</sup>NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Habitat Conservation, Silver Spring, MD, USA

<sup>5</sup>United States Geological Service, Lafayette, LA, USA

The Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard (CMECS) provides a uniform approach for identifying, characterizing and naming ecological units in coastal and marine systems. It is intended to facilitate the study, monitoring, protection, restoration and management of habitats supporting commercially- and recreationally-important species, vital habitats for protected species, unique biotic assemblages, and key ecosystem features. CMECS describes standards for classifying ecological units in the benthic, sub-benthic, geological, and water column regimes and proposes unit definitions for inventorying, sampling, and mapping activities.

CMECS is intended to create a comprehensive ecological classification, build on existing work, be easily compatible with mapping, document terminology, and allow for dynamic content. It is the product of development, testing and validation by experts from multiple federal and state agencies, academia and non-governmental organizations, led by NOAA and NatureServe. It is designed for use in North American marine, estuarine, and Great Lakes ecosystems, but is applicable world-wide.

In August 2010, CMECS was published in the Federal Register by the Federal Geographic Data Committee's (FGDC) Standards Working Group as a proposed federal standard. The results of the review are now being incorporated to complete a final draft of the standard. Proposed changes to the draft standard will be highlighted. The CMECS team encourages pilot projects and crosswalks with approaches presently in use to test and enhance the compatibility and applicability of CMECS.

Contact Information: Kathy Goodin, NatureServe, 1101 Wilson Blvd, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor, Arlington, VA 22209, Phone: 703 908-1883, Fax: 703 908-1917, Email: [kathy\\_goodin@natureserve.org](mailto:kathy_goodin@natureserve.org)