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Marine Intertidal Project Guidance



Introduction

The marine intertidal zone is the area of shore between the extremes of high and low tides. It is also known as the foreshore and seashore, and is sometimes referred to as the littoral zone. This area encompasses many different types of habitats, including rocky and sandy shorelines, mudflats, salt marshes, tidepools and mangrove roots. The variety of wildlife in this area can include birds (beach-nesting and shorebirds), sea stars, sea urchins, sea turtles, juvenile fish, oysters and mussels. Because of the extreme environment, organisms have adapted to wave exposure, salinity changes, and temperature changes to survive.

Depending on the location, the ownership of the intertidal zone varies greatly. On private beaches, some areas use the low water mark as the dividing zone between public property and that of the beach owner. Other areas use the high water mark. Even in areas where the intertidal zone is considered public, there may be exceptions, and some private beaches may allow public access to certain areas. Regulations are also an important consideration, as many governing bodies have regulations intended to protect the fragile intertidal zone.

Threats to marine intertidal habitats include poorly planned development; polluted runoff; human disturbances (specimen collecting, dredging, draining, and paving); invasive species; offshore oil spills; and coastal land loss and subsidence.

Building Your Program

Projects are divided into four categories: **Habitat**, **Species Management**, **Education and Awareness** and **Other Options**. You can build a program with more than one of each category but you must associate your program with at least one habitat. This Marine Intertidal Project Guidance is in the **Habitat** category. You will be able to associate your marine intertidal project with **Education and Awareness** projects, as well as with **Species Management** projects like those focused on birds.



Habitat – Projects that focus on conservation actions to protect, restore and manage different habitats.



Species Management – Projects addressing the conservation needs of targeted wildlife species or groups of species.



Education and Awareness – Projects to improve awareness, understanding and skills relating to conservation and the environment.



Other Options – Specialized projects that add value to your conservation efforts.

Browse the Project Guidance library at wildlifehc.org/pg.

What Do Marine Intertidal Projects Look Like?

Marine intertidal habitat projects try to create, restore or protect existing marine intertidal habitat. In rocky intertidal areas, the main goal may be to protect existing areas from negative impacts by human activities such as collecting or routine site operations, and establish a monitoring and control program for invasive species. Salt marshes can also benefit from restoration activities, such as replanting locally-appropriate native vegetation.

It may be necessary to partner with local or national agencies depending on regulations of the project area.

Considerations for Corporate Lands

Projects implemented on corporate-owned lands have different circumstances and challenges to those on public lands, protected lands or wild lands.

Which types of corporate lands are best suited for marine intertidal projects?

Marine intertidal habitats in areas that recognize private shoreline ownership, and on public lands that are adjacent to corporate lands, have the potential for conservation projects. Partnership and coordination with governing agencies is required for public intertidal lands.

Addressing challenges

The corporate context presents certain challenges for implementing marine intertidal projects. Understanding these concerns and potential ways to overcome them can help your marine intertidal project succeed in the long term.

Concern	Response
Legal knowledge of rules and regulations that govern the intertidal area required.	<i>Teams should seek advice from experts, and partner with the local agency responsible for the intertidal zone.</i>
Companies may not own the land on which the intertidal habitat occurs.	<i>Teams should partner with the appropriate government agency on the project.</i>
Team members will likely have knowledge gaps.	<i>Knowledgeable staff or local experts from an existing initiative, NGO, natural resource agency, or university could provide volunteers with training to equip them with the knowledge needed.</i>

Getting Started with Marine Intertidal Projects

For a project to qualify toward Conservation Certification, you must be able to answer “yes” to five questions.

1. Is the project locally appropriate?
2. Does it have a stated conservation or education objective?
3. Does it provide value or benefit to the natural community?
4. Have outcomes been measured and is there supporting documentation?
5. Does it exceed any pertinent regulatory requirements?

Conservation and education objectives

It is a requirement of Conservation Certification that marine intertidal projects be designed to meet one or more conservation objectives. Objectives can guide the direction of the project, help motivate others to participate, and provide a basis for evaluation.

The following are suggested objectives for marine intertidal projects. Your team may choose one or

more of these objectives, or develop your own relevant objectives.

- Restoring or creating a diverse mosaic of intertidal zone habitats that will provide for both native plant and animal species
- Monitoring an intertidal habitat as part of a long-term monitoring plan that includes invasive species monitoring and management
- Restoring salt marshes in degraded areas to provide the same ecosystem functions as natural salt marsh communities
- Providing education for employees and community members on certain features or functions of an intertidal habitat and its value to wildlife, water quality and recreational opportunities
- Protecting marine intertidal areas from negative impacts caused by human activities
- Restoring or conserving tidal flow patterns
- Restoring or maintaining deposition from streams

The following strategies are recommended to strengthen the conservation impact of your project:

- Plant and manage vegetation so that the intertidal habitat contains or exceeds a minimum level of diversity appropriate to the region
- Monitor the intertidal habitat for invasive species and implement appropriate methods for control
- Connect to larger local and regional initiatives for intertidal habitat stewardship.
- Commit to maintain the project over the long term
- Include regular, credible monitoring of the intertidal habitat and its species
- Establish a baseline of what plant and animal species are in the marine intertidal habitat, upon which desired outcomes can be based and evaluated
- Demonstrate an understanding of why each species was chosen for the planting list, including wildlife benefit, substrate and light requirements, or its role in the natural community
- If privately owned, provide opportunities for college students, professors and other scientific professionals to conduct research in the project area
- Include credible monitoring that contributes to a citizen science program or the database of an established marine intertidal stewardship organization
- Provide multiple ecological functions
- Address the negative impact of human activities, like specimen collection and disturbance through protective measures and education
- Be located near an existing protected or restored marine intertidal area, and be managed in alignment with that marine intertidal area

Partnerships

Intertidal projects implemented on corporate lands or on adjacent public lands can benefit from partnerships with groups that have established marine and wetland conservation, and education objectives. A team can use such a partnership to help design, create or monitor its intertidal habitat project and provide educational opportunities for employees and community members. Partners may also be able to assist the team with obtaining funding for the project, and identify learning links to other conservation priorities in the region.

Resources

Your project may benefit from online or printed resources available for your region to support the design, delivery, maintenance and monitoring of marine intertidal projects.

A search for “intertidal” in the Conservation Registry returns several projects implemented through WHC’s certification program. This is a great place to find inspiration for your project and see what others are doing in and around your location.

The following terms, in any combination, may be useful when searching online for items related to this theme:

marine intertidal	littoral zone
intertidal zone	mudflats
tide pools	mangroves
beach	tidal marsh
foreshore	salt marsh
seashore	coastal management

Understanding the Application Process

Documentation

When applying for Conservation Certification, you will provide documentation of the planning, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of your marine intertidal project. The following is required documentation for marine intertidal projects; however, you may also submit additional supporting materials.

Map/image of the project area, showing the relative size and approximate location of the project (other relevant information can be shown in the map as well, but is not required)

Photographs or videos that depict the progress of the project implementation and management.

Maintenance plans that demonstrate appropriate activities that meet the needs of the habitat to fully support the target species and support the conservation and education objectives.

Baseline data that provides a biological baseline upon which post-implementation monitoring can be based and used to evaluate the progress of the project and determine next steps.

Monitoring logs that show the frequency, type, and results of monitoring of the project, whether in an informal manner or a scientifically rigorous manner.

Examples of technical advice utilized in the project, such as consultants, guidebooks, websites, journal articles, etc.

Updated plant list/survey that lists all of the plant and animal species currently known to occur in the marine intertidal habitat, including common and scientific names and whether the species is native.

Application questions

As you complete the application online, you will be asked the following questions about your marine intertidal project. These questions will help us understand and evaluate your project.

	Question	Why this question is important
Objective	What are the project's conservation objectives?	<i>Having a conservation objective is a requirement for certification.</i>
Overview	What is the total size of the habitat managed for this project?	<i>This provides us with a description of your project to allow us to assess it. We also want to know what you are trying to achieve.</i>
	Describe the habitat in general including plants and structures.	
	Give a brief description of the vegetation types found in the habitat and list several of the common plant species.	
	Briefly summarize activities taking place to manage the targeted habitat.	
	Upload a map showing the location and photos showing the marine intertidal habitat.	
	When did work on the ground begin?	
Habitat Creation or Expansion	Give a brief description of the vegetation types found in the habitat and list several of the common plant species.	<i>For marine intertidal habitats, size and location are important factors that determine success and ecological benefit.</i>
	Upload a dated list of current plant species in the habitat including common and scientific names and whether the species is native to the region.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Habitat Creation or Expansion	Is this a new project not presented in previous applications?	<i>For marine intertidal habitats, size and location are important factors that determine success and ecological benefit.</i>
	Does it replace a habitat with less ecological value?	
	Describe the habitat prior to your project.	
	Describe any design or plant selection considerations that were part of this new project.	
	Upload documentation of the specific considerations.	
	Since the last application, have you expanded the size of the area being managed?	
	What is the size of the marine intertidal that has been added since the last application?	
	Does the expansion replace a habitat with less ecological value?	
	Describe the habitat present prior to your project.	
	Describe any design or plant selection considerations that were part of this project expansion.	
	Upload documentation of the specific considerations.	
	What is the size of the area that is being newly managed since the last application?	
	How is the area maintained as a marine intertidal habitat?	

	Question	Why this question is important
Management	Describe the steps taken to maintain the habitat.	<i>Appropriate management policies and practices are also important to the target species.</i>
	Provide a timeline of maintenance and other completed activities.	
	Upload documentation of these activities.	
Monitoring	Was baseline data collected for this project?	<i>Monitoring is essential to understand the impact of the project and to be able to adapt the project as it develops.</i>
	Describe the types of baseline data collected.	
	Upload the baseline data.	
	Select each type of monitoring that is being carried out.	
	List each type of monitoring, including the frequency and list any plans or protocols used.	
	Upload the monitoring protocols, if applicable.	
	Upload the monitoring data and any analysis, if applicable.	
	Provide a brief summary of results from monitoring.	
	Evaluate the success of the project. If there were any concerns, what are the plans to address them in the future?	

	Question	Why this question is important
Employee Participation	Do employees actively contribute to the habitat project?	<i>Employee participation can strengthen a project and secure its future.</i>
	How many employees participate in the project on a regular basis?	
	Describe how employees are involved in this project.	
	How many employee hours were spent on the following activities each year?	
Other Participants	Do any groups or individuals outside of your company actively contribute to the project on a regular basis?	<i>It is not always possible to recruit outside groups to a project. Conservation and education partners can strengthen a project and provide different audiences to use it for lessons or recreation, thus broadening its reach.</i>
	Select the types of groups.	
	List the names of the groups you work with.	
	Describe their involvement in this project.	
	How many hours were spent by the groups on the following activities each year?	
	If you work with a marine intertidal specialist and have a current letter of support from them, upload it here.	
	List additional sources of technical advice (e.g. website, guide-book, etc.) and describe how they were used.	
Regulatory Requirements	Are any aspects of the project done in relation to regulatory requirements?	<i>Going beyond compliance is a requirement for certification.</i>
	Explain how the project exceeds requirements.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Connectivity	Does the project connect with other marine intertidal habitats on neighboring land?	<i>Connectivity onsite and across fence lines helps to decrease fragmentation, one of the leading causes of habitat loss.</i>
	Describe how the project connects with the other marine intertidal habitats.	
	Describe any coordinated management efforts with other marine intertidal habitats.	
Alignment	Does the project align with any larger scale initiatives? (e.g. corporate strategy, regional conservation plan, migratory pathway, watershed plan, etc.)	<i>Aligning conservation efforts with large-scale conservation plans and other regional conservation initiatives allows a site-based activity to support a landscape-scale objective.</i>
	Is the project part of a corporate level commitment to such habitats?	
	Upload documentation of your corporate commitment to marine intertidal habitats.	
	Does the project align with an existing conservation plan or other large-scale initiative?	
	List the conservation plans or other large-scale initiatives the project aligns with and provide website links, if available.	
	How does your project align with these large-scale initiatives?	
Existing Certifications	Does this project have third party related certification for this habitat?	<i>If a qualified body recognizes your project, we want to know about it.</i>
	List the certifications and provide a website link if available.	

Content development for Conservation Certification

To inform the development of Conservation Certification, WHC analyzed the projects it was recognizing through its certification program to assess whether they were aligned with contemporary conservation and education priorities.

Following this assessment and using information from it, WHC convened Advisory Committees around many of the conservation and education themes to develop the content that would guide practitioners and applicants in the future. Some themes, including marine intertidal projects, that have not yet been informed by external stakeholders, are presented to allow applicants to receive recognition. WHC plans to have all themes informed by stakeholders.

More information can be found about this process in the “Our Impact” section of wildlifehc.org, under “Commitment to Transparency.”



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The WHC Strategy and Planning team can help you build a successful project by identifying needs, making connections with partners and resources, and providing strategies that meet business and conservation goals. Contact us today.

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Every act of conservation matters.

