

1 Visions IV:
2 A Strategic Plan for the Coastal and Estuarine
3 Research Federation (2017-2022)

4
5 Draft v5 for Public Comment
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7 About the Federation
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9 The Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) is a multi-disciplinary organization of individuals
10 who study, educate about, manage, and promote awareness of coastal and estuarine ecosystems, including
11 the effects of human activities on these environments. The Federation’s members are dedicated to
12 advancing understanding and appreciation of the Earth’s estuaries and coasts, to the wise use and
13 management of these systems, and to making the results of their research and management actions
14 available to their colleagues and to the public. Members of the Federation are researchers, managers,
15 educators, consultants, students, and others who are interested in estuaries, wetlands, and the coastal
16 ocean.
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18 CERF is a private, non-profit organization. The Federation was created in 1971, when members of two
19 regionally-based estuarine research societies in the United States decided that an international
20 organization was needed to address estuarine and coastal issues more broadly. The regionally based
21 Affiliate Societies now number seven and encompass coastal regions along the United States, Canada,
22 and Mexico, and CERF’s vision is to more directly serve regions beyond North America.
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24 Mission and Activities
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26 The Federation advances understanding and stewardship of estuarine and coastal ecosystems worldwide.
27 Its overall mission is to:
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- 1 • Promote research in estuarine and coastal ecosystems
- 2 • Support education of scientists, decision-makers, and the public
- 3 • Facilitate communication among these groups

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5 Membership in the Federation is open to all who support these goals. The Federation currently has
6 approximately 1200 members from over 25 countries worldwide; Affiliate Societies have about 1600
7 members (with some overlapping membership with CERF) that help to comprise the Federation.

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9 The Federation addresses the purposes listed above via, but not limited to, the following activities: 1)
10 convening international, biennial conferences; 2) supporting frequent meetings of regional Affiliate
11 Societies; 3) publishing the scholarly journal *Estuaries and Coasts*, quarterly Federation Newsletter
12 *CERFs Up!*, management-focused electronic publication *Coastal and Estuarine Science News (CESN)*,
13 and textbook *Estuarine Ecology*; 4) maintaining a CERF website and social media platforms; 5)
14 providing training and professional development through webinars, in-person workshops, and similar
15 resources; and 6) providing advice on estuarine and coastal management and policy issues.

16 17 Previous Strategic Plans of the Federation

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19 The Federation has developed three previous Strategic Plans. The first strategic plan covered the period
20 1993-2004, and the second spanned the period 2005-2011. Visions III, covering 2012-2016, was
21 finalized under CERF President Susan Williams, and implemented through the Governing Boards led by
22 Walter Boynton (2011-2013), Ken Heck (2013-2015), and Robert Twilley (2015-2017). The goals of
23 these three previous plans have largely been accomplished, although some are long-term and ongoing. At
24 the beginning of Robert Twilley's administration, the Governing Board began strategic planning for
25 Visions IV, to cover the 2017-2022 period. The plan was developed by eight Governing Board
26 committees: Affiliate Societies, Career Development and Education, Communications, Conference
27 Strategy, International, Membership, Policy, and Publications. The Governing Board also sought
28 extensive grassroots input from members and Affiliate Societies. The Visions IV strategic plan was
29 ratified by the Governing Board in XXXXX 2017 and presented to the Federation at the 24th biennial
30 conference in Providence, Rhode Island. It will guide the Federation's activities through the 50th
31 anniversary celebration in 2021.

Vision for the Future of the Federation

CERF is the leading scientific society promoting research, education, and management in coastal and estuarine systems worldwide. The society is the international voice of coastal and estuarine science, with a closely networked membership that is connected to a global community of scientists, managers, policy makers, educators, and the public. Core to this vision is to increase support and promote disciplinary and multi-disciplinary scientific research, and to integrate new scientific understanding that improves the management and stewardship of coastal and estuarine ecosystems. Contributing to the vision of CERF are:

- Recognized leadership in advancing coastal and estuarine science and communicating its value to society
- A broad, diverse, and inclusive membership within and outside of North America
- Mutually beneficial relationships with regional Affiliate Societies that strengthen and enhance capabilities of both CERF and the Affiliates
- Strong partnerships with related scientific societies and organizations around the world
- Consistently excellent publications and conferences that are highly valued by CERF members and the broader scientific community
- Rich professional development opportunities for members at all career stages and across a range of career paths
- Members that are better able to communicate science and engage with managers and policy makers to ensure their science is useful and used

Research Foundations

The Federation is founded on the value of scientific research to society, with a focus on improving our understanding of the structure and function of estuarine and coastal ecosystems. CERF supports and promotes scientific research that improves the fundamental understanding, and the management and stewardship, of coastal ecosystems. CERF serves this role by highlighting new discoveries in its journal, biennial conferences, and other publications and activities. CERF also promotes the communication of new discoveries and synthesis of existing information to decision makers and the public. This emphasis on high-quality research is a cross-cutting focus of the themes and objectives described in Visions IV. By

1 promoting high-quality research at various scales, CERF helps to identify significant gaps in the technical
2 knowledge and understanding of estuarine and coastal sciences, and articulate priority areas for new
3 research; and it encourages academic institutions, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations,
4 and other groups to make contributions of institutional, collaborative and financial support to address the
5 priority research issues identified by CERF.

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7 Theme I

8 Support Coastal and Estuarine Research, Communication, and

9 Management

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11 CERF has many avenues for promoting and communicating coastal and estuarine science and
12 management, both internally among members and externally to non-member scientists, policy makers and
13 managers, and other audiences. CERF's core tools for supplying information include the biennial
14 conference and CERF's primary publications: the scholarly journal *Estuaries and Coasts*, the newsletter
15 *CERFs Up!*, the management-focused electronic publication *CESN*, and the textbook *Estuarine Ecology*.
16 CERF's biennial conferences are also recognized as premier networking opportunities for the coastal and
17 estuarine science, management, and education communities. CERF utilizes other communication methods
18 to connect, educate, and engage members and other audiences, such as its website, webinars, social
19 media, and supporting meetings of its regional Affiliate Societies. CERF is also active in education and
20 outreach activities to various audiences including policy makers, the coastal and estuarine science
21 community, formal and informal educators, and the public through the development and implementation
22 of diverse activities such as briefings, letters, and workshops.

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24 Goal I.A: Improve the Federation's ability to promote research and communicate key

25 findings to the science and management communities

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27 Objectives

- 28 1. Develop a communication strategy that specifies and targets key audiences, communication
29 needs, and elucidates how CERF members can use communication tools to achieve the core
30 objectives of the Visions IV strategic plan.

- 1 2. Develop or enhance communications tools to achieve communication strategy objectives and
2 promote key CERF activities.
- 3 3. Strengthen the quality of CERF publications, including ensuring publication of high-quality
4 research, reviews, and syntheses; and promotion of CERF publications and activities worldwide.
- 5 4. Transform the CERF Newsletter into a magazine-style publication with expanded content.
- 6 5. Evaluate the scope, format, content and policies of the CERF conference and recommend changes
7 to the Conference Organizing Committee that will enhance collaboration with the Governing
8 Board and its strategic vision for the Federation.

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11 **Goal I.B: Enhance mechanisms for translation of science to management through**
12 **information sharing, syntheses, and outreach**

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14 **Objectives**

- 15 1. Identify and implement mechanisms for promoting interaction between scientists, managers and
16 students at the international level (i.e., that transcends the North American context).
- 17 2. Promote and sponsor educational activities that increase understanding of coastal and estuarine
18 systems and enhance the capacity of CERF members and others to engage in outreach and
19 translation of science into effective resource management and policy.
- 20 3. Enhance and expand the communication of policy-relevant science, and applications of CERF
21 science in wise stewardship and management of coastal and estuarine resources.
- 22 4. Enhance the role of the Affiliates as catalysts for regional collaborations that facilitate research
23 and information sharing, increase knowledge, and generate syntheses that lead to management
24 actions.
- 25 5. Partner with sister societies to leverage strengths and resources toward shared policy outreach
26 goals and objectives.

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29 **Theme II**

30 **Create a Community that Fosters Collaborations and Advances the**
31 **Education of Current and Future Federation Scientists**

1 A fundamental aspect of CERF’s mission is to advance education of, and facilitate collaboration within,
2 the coastal and estuarine community. CERF’s value is in building a supportive network of individuals and
3 teams dedicated to diverse aspects of coastal and estuarine science and management, and in providing
4 resources to members to help them advance and succeed in their careers. Visions IV seeks to enhance the
5 resources of the Federation and develop new benefits that help our members develop their professional
6 skills. In addition, Visions IV focuses on enhancing opportunities and outreach to key sectors, including
7 the international community, underrepresented minorities, Affiliate Societies, and student and early-
8 career professionals. By articulating and implementing CERF’s mission and values, we seek to develop a
9 broader, more diverse, and more inclusive society that will be of benefit to all members.

11 Goal II.A: Enhance Federation member services

13 Objectives

- 14 1. Enhance the value of CERF membership for individuals across the spectrum of coastal and
15 estuarine science careers and throughout the full continuum of career stages by providing
16 educational and professional development resources.
- 17 2. Increase the recruitment and retention of student members and the transition of student to
18 professional members by promoting activities that benefit student- and early-career development.
- 19 3. Expand CERF membership through outreach efforts that articulate CERF value and by promoting
20 member benefits to key audiences, including *Estuaries and Coasts* authors, lapsed members, and
21 the international community beyond North America.

23 Goal II.B: Enhance benefits to Affiliate Societies and other partner organizations

25 Objectives

- 26 1. Collaborate with Affiliate Societies to engage students, early career scientists, and other potential
27 members to expand opportunities for CERF and Affiliate members simultaneously.
- 28 2. Enhance communication and collaboration among Affiliate Societies and between the Affiliates
29 and CERF
- 30 3. Seek opportunities and establish protocols to formalize new relationships with scientific societies
31 and regional entities, particularly those outside North America, to promote estuarine and coastal
32 science, management, and policy to a broader membership.

1 **Goal II.C: Build a more inclusive and diverse society**

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3 **Objectives**

- 4 1. Broaden participation in CERF by promoting an inclusive culture and opportunities for
5 underrepresented and underserved minorities in coastal and estuarine science at all career stages.
6 2. Enhance benefits for current and potential international members.

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8 **Appendix I: Implementation plan table**

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10 The implementation of this strategic plan is described in the actions, timelines, and metrics listed in the
11 implementation plan table in Appendix I. The intent of a separate implementation plan is to allow the
12 Governing Board and its committees the opportunity to develop detailed actions that can be added to and
13 adjusted as conditions change. The Implementation Plan will be a living document that will be updated at
14 least once per 2-year Governing Board period.

