



Coastal Planning Under the Environment Protection Act, 1986

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Coastal regions represent some of the most valuable environmental and economic areas within a nation. These zones support fisheries, tourism, maritime trade, transportation facilities, cultural activities, and diverse ecosystems. At the same time, coastal environments are sensitive to human activities and natural processes. Increasing urbanization, industrial expansion, infrastructure development, and population growth have placed significant pressure on coastal resources. In India, the need to protect coastal ecosystems while allowing sustainable development led to the establishment of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework under the Environment protection act, 1986. This framework serves as an important legal and administrative mechanism for managing activities along the country's extensive coastline.

The Environment protection act, 1986, was enacted following growing concerns regarding environmental degradation and the need for a comprehensive legal structure to address environmental issues. The Act empowers the central government to take measures for environmental conservation and pollution control. Within this broader legislative structure, the Coastal Regulation Zone framework was introduced to regulate activities in coastal areas and ensure that development occurs in a manner that minimizes environmental damage.

One of the major features of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework is the classification of coastal areas into different categories based on environmental sensitivity and existing patterns of development. This classification system enables authorities to apply specific regulations according to local conditions. Environmentally sensitive regions receive greater protection, while developed urban coastal areas may permit certain activities under prescribed conditions. This approach allows management decisions to reflect the characteristics and needs of different coastal locations.

The regulation of construction activities forms an important component of the framework. Unplanned development near shorelines can lead to habitat destruction, erosion, pollution,

and increased vulnerability to coastal hazards. By establishing guidelines regarding permissible and restricted activities, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework seeks to reduce environmental impacts associated with construction. These regulations influence residential projects, tourism facilities, industrial establishments, ports, and infrastructure developments situated within designated coastal zones.

Environmental conservation remains a central objective of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework. Coastal ecosystems support a wide variety of plant and animal species, many of which depend on specific habitats for survival. Mangrove forests, for example, provide breeding grounds for fish and act as natural barriers against storm surges. Coral reefs contribute to marine biodiversity and reduce wave energy reaching shorelines. Protection measures included within the framework help maintain these ecological assets and support the long-term health of coastal environments.

Effective coastal management requires balancing environmental protection with developmental aspirations. Excessive restrictions may affect economic opportunities, while insufficient regulation can result in environmental degradation and increased vulnerability to hazards. The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework seeks to provide a structured approach for achieving this balance by establishing clear guidelines for activities within coastal regions. Through careful planning and regulation, coastal resources can be utilized responsibly while maintaining ecological integrity.

In conclusion, the Coastal Regulation Zone framework under the Environment protection act, 1986, serves as a significant instrument for managing India's coastal areas. By regulating development activities, protecting sensitive ecosystems, supporting coastal communities, and addressing environmental risks, the framework contributes to sustainable coastal management. As coastal regions continue to experience demographic, economic, and environmental changes, the role of effective coastal regulation will remain important in preserving ecological resources and supporting long-term development objectives.

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Received: 24-Nov-2025, Manuscript No. JCZM-25-32018; **Editor assigned:** 27-Nov-2025, PreQC No. JCZM-25-32018; **Reviewed:** 08-Dec-2025, QC No. JCZM-25-32018; **Revised:** 15-Dec-2025 Manuscript No. JCZM-25-32018; **Published:** 22-Dec-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2329-6682.25.28.711

Citation: Chatterjee A (2025). Coastal Planning Under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. J Coast Zone Manag. 28:711.

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