

Review of: "Contextualizing Public Coastal Access Challenges in South Africa, a Review of Best Practices in Selected Countries"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

While this article is outside my comfort zone of environmental physics and applied geochemistry, I have some familiarity with the subject matter from professional interests in producing science-based actionable guidance to coastal environmental managers, and offer some comments from this perspective.

The thesis of the paper is sound: a survey of international practice in regulating public access to coasts, and consideration of how this relates to historical inequities in South Africa and how these might be addressed with well-formulated and executed government policy.

The structure of the article is also sound, with some introduction to set the scene, an outline of the methodology, and then the discussion of several factors. The article is extensively referenced.

While it starts out strongly, somewhere in the midst of section 3, I felt the arguments presented start becoming scattered. Supporting evidence jumps abruptly between examples from Cuba, the United States, the UK, and Australia. These transitions are not smooth, and some are confusingly incomplete – requiring the reader to check the references for national context. At the end of section 4, the example of “New England” should be the United Kingdom. (I started searching for U.S. states in New England - Maine to Connecticut.) This paragraph also refers to the “Secretary of State,” but in the U.K., this needs clarification with a portfolio. In section 3.6, the “State of Victoria” does not clarify this is Australia. Australian states have far less autonomy to regulate the coast than do U.S. states; the author really should point this out.

Jumping between U.S.A. states of Texas, California, Rhode Island, the argument picks out individual aspects of those very different state approaches and loses some coherence. The paper might be stronger if a preamble first worked swiftly through these different examples in turn, summarizing key strengths and weaknesses in a common framework, and then referred back to this synopsis as the section 3 topics are addressed, rather than introducing new material in the course of the discussion. Some U.S. states, notably Massachusetts and New Jersey, heavily protect private rights to coastal access, and in fairness, perhaps these negative examples should receive some comment in counterpart to California.

To me, the standard of peer review is to judge whether the article is original (it appears so), makes no factual errors (it does not), and has conclusions supported by the evidence presented (it does). My comments above are intended to

suggest ways that the author could polish the article to make the presentation more logical, compelling, and easier to follow.