§ 230.42 Mud flats.

(a) Mud flats are broad flat areas along the sea coast and in coastal rivers to the head of tidal influence and in inland lakes, ponds, and riverine systems. When mud flats are inundated, wind and wave action may resuspend bottom sediments. Coastal mud flats are exposed at extremely low tides and inundated at high tides with the water table at or near the surface of the substrate. The substrate of mud flats contains organic material and particles smaller in size than sand. They are either unvegetated or vegetated only by algal mats.

(b) Possible loss of values: The discharge of dredged or fill material can cause changes in water circulation patterns which may permanently flood or dewater the mud flat or disrupt periodic inundation, resulting in an increase in the rate of erosion or accretion. Such changes can deplete or eliminate mud flat biota, foraging areas, and nursery areas. Changes in inundation patterns can affect the chemical and biological exchange and decomposition process occurring on the mud flat and change the deposition of suspended material affecting the productivity of the area. Changes may reduce the mud flat’s capacity to dissipate storm surge runoff.

§ 230.43 Vegetated shallows.

(a) Vegetated shallows are permanently inundated areas that under normal circumstances support communities of rooted aquatic vegetation, such as turtle grass and eelgrass in estuarine or marine systems as well as a number of freshwater species in rivers and lakes.

(b) Possible loss of values: The discharge of dredged or fill material can adversely affect colonies of reef building organisms by burying them, by releasing contaminants such as hydrocarbons into the water column, by reducing light penetration through the water, and by increasing the level of suspended particulates. Coral organisms are extremely sensitive to even slight reductions in light penetration or increases in suspended particulates. These adverse effects will cause a loss of productive colonies which in turn provide habitat for many species of highly specialized aquatic organisms.