Coast Policies Said Short-Ranged

Because of present policy-making methods, an advisory panel says, decisions on the use of coastal resources are made on an "ad hoc basis perhaps with insufficient consideration given to the long-range effect . . ."

As a result, the Louisiana advisory commission on coastal and Marine Resources said Thursday in its first report to the legislature, state agencies responsible for resources in the coastal zone are operating in a policy vacuum.

"Individuals who currently have the authority and responsibility regarding the use of coastal resources have nowhere to look for guidance," the commission said.

The commission, created by the 1971 legislature, was given the job of preparing a coastal zone management plan for Louisiana.

As a first step, the commission reviewed in its first report the current role of state agencies in the conservation and development of the state's coast.

It concluded that there is little coordinated planning and that only rarely has there been any recognition of the area as a separate entity.

The report concluded that the Louisiana coastal zone "is a delicately balanced, highly vulnerable ecosystem . . . ."

According to the report, the absence of special attention to the area has helped contribute to the lack of a "clearcut state policy as to how coastal resources ... should be utilized in future years . . . ."

As a result of ad hoc decision-making, the report said, the commission staff found a tendency to create new boards and commissions to solve narrowly defined problems and to promote special projects.

Such bodies, the report added, appear to be generally under-funded, frequently understaffed, and "many tend to compete with other agencies which have broader perspectives . . . ."

However, the report said, because of the preliminary nature of the staff analysis, the commission decided "to defer any recommendations on reorganization at this time . . . ."

The initial report, the commission concluded, "should be viewed as an introduction to an intensive study into state governmental operations and resource management in the coastal zone . . . ."

The commission said its next step will be to focus on specific alternative methods of solving problems related to management of coastal zone resources.