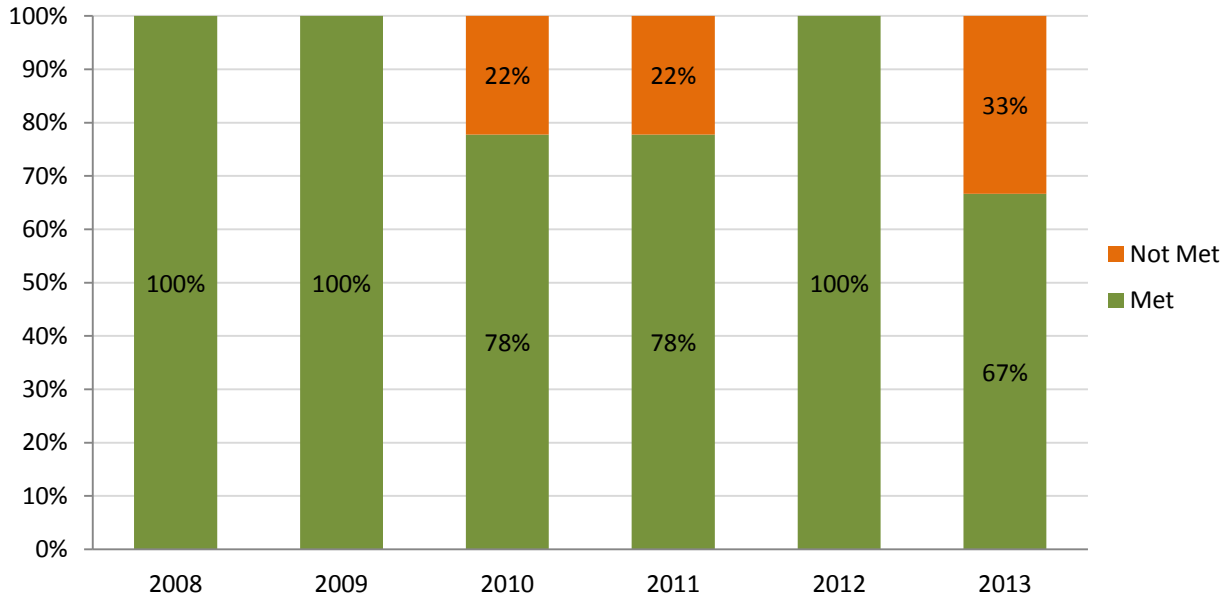
Subobjective: Coastal and Oceans

EPA's Coastal and Ocean Protection program met 67% (two out of three measures) of its commitments in 2013. This was a decline compared to the FY 2012 results (Figure 43). It should be noted that due to Agency streamlining efforts, the number of commitment measures for the Coastal and Oceans program was reduced from nine to three in FY 2012.

Figure 43: Coastal and Ocean Subobjective Six-Year Trend[17]



[17] The end-of-year result for CO-SP20.N11 (96% of active dredged material sites achieving environmentally acceptable conditions) missed the FY13 national commitment by only 1%. It should be noted that due to variability in the universe of active ocean dredged material disposal sites, results can vary from year to year (e.g., between 85 percent and 99 percent). While this much variability is not expected every year, the results can fluctuate each year.

FY 2013 ACS Code	Abbreviated Measure Description	Results and Commitment Status: = Met; = Not Met; = Data Not Available; = Indicator/Long-Term (No Commitment); = Measure Did Not Exist							Appendix Page Number (D-0)/ Figure Number
		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Subobjective 2.2.2 Improve Coastal and Ocean Waters									
CO-222.N11	Improve coastal aquatic system health (index)	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.8	3.0	3.0	D-32/Fig. 44
CO-SP20.N11	Percent ocean dumping sites acceptable conditions	85%	99%	99%	90%	93%	97%	96%	D-33/Fig. 49
CO-02	Number coastline miles protected vessel sewage (cumulative)				53,634	54,494	58,929	63,773	D-33
CO-04	Rate of return federal investment for NEP (million dollars)	208	83	514	274	662	323	822	D-34/Fig. 48
CO-06	Number active dredged material sites monitored annually	33	28	38	33	33	35	40	D-34
CO-432.N11	Number additional NEP acres habitat protected or restored	102,462	82,828	125,437	89,985	62,213	114,579	127,594	D-35/Fig. 46

FY 2013 Performance Highlights and Management Challenges

In April 2012, the federal government released the fourth *National Coastal Condition Report* (NCCR IV), which highlights EPA's National Coastal Assessment (NCA) data, collected primarily in 2003 and 2006. The findings from this report serve as a foundation for EPA and its partners to meet their commitments to water quality and offer insights on what additional actions are needed to better protect, manage, and restore coastal ecosystems. The NCCR provides a rating on the ecosystem health of eight coastal regions and U.S. coastal waters overall.[18] According to the NCCR IV, the overall condition of the nation's coastal waters is rated **fair, or 3.0** on a scale of 1 to 5. EPA and its partners set a commitment for an overall score of 2.8 (fair) for FY 2012. (Subobjective 2.2.2) (Figure 44). A score below the target reflects the need for continued work to improve the condition of the nation's coastal waters. Because EPA is not collecting annual data on this measure, it is able to maintain the same target for the period within which a particular NCCR is applicable.

The National Coastal Condition Assessment Score provides a consistent metric that allows comparisons of regional coastal conditions and overall condition scores from one assessment period to the next. Comparison of the scores over time shows that the overall condition of U.S. coastal waters has improved since the 1990s. Although the overall condition is rated as fair in all four reports, the score supporting the rating has gradually increased from 2.0 in the NCCR I to 3.0 in the most recent report (Figure 45). The NCCR IV includes for the first time the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. If the national score were recalculated without Alaska, Hawaii, and the island territories, however, the overall condition score would be 2.5 (rated fair; only a slight improvement from the overall condition score of 2.3 in NCCR III).

[18] This rating is based on five indicators or indices of ecological condition: water quality index (including dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll-a [Chla], nitrogen, phosphorus, and water clarity); sediment quality index (including sediment toxicity, sediment contaminants, and sediment total organic carbon [TOC]); benthic index; coastal habitat index; and fish tissue contaminants index. Each index is given a score based on a five-point system, where a score of less than 2.0 is rated poor, 2.0 to less 2.3 is rated poor to fair, greater than 2.3 to 3.7 is rated fair, greater than 3.7 to 4 is rated good to fair, and greater than 4.0 is rated good.

The next NCCR, expected out in late fall 2014, will not include Alaska, Puerto Rico, and territories as they were not part of the 2010 coastal National Aquatic Resource Survey (NARS) upon which the report will be based.

Figure 44: Overall Condition of U.S. Coastal Waters

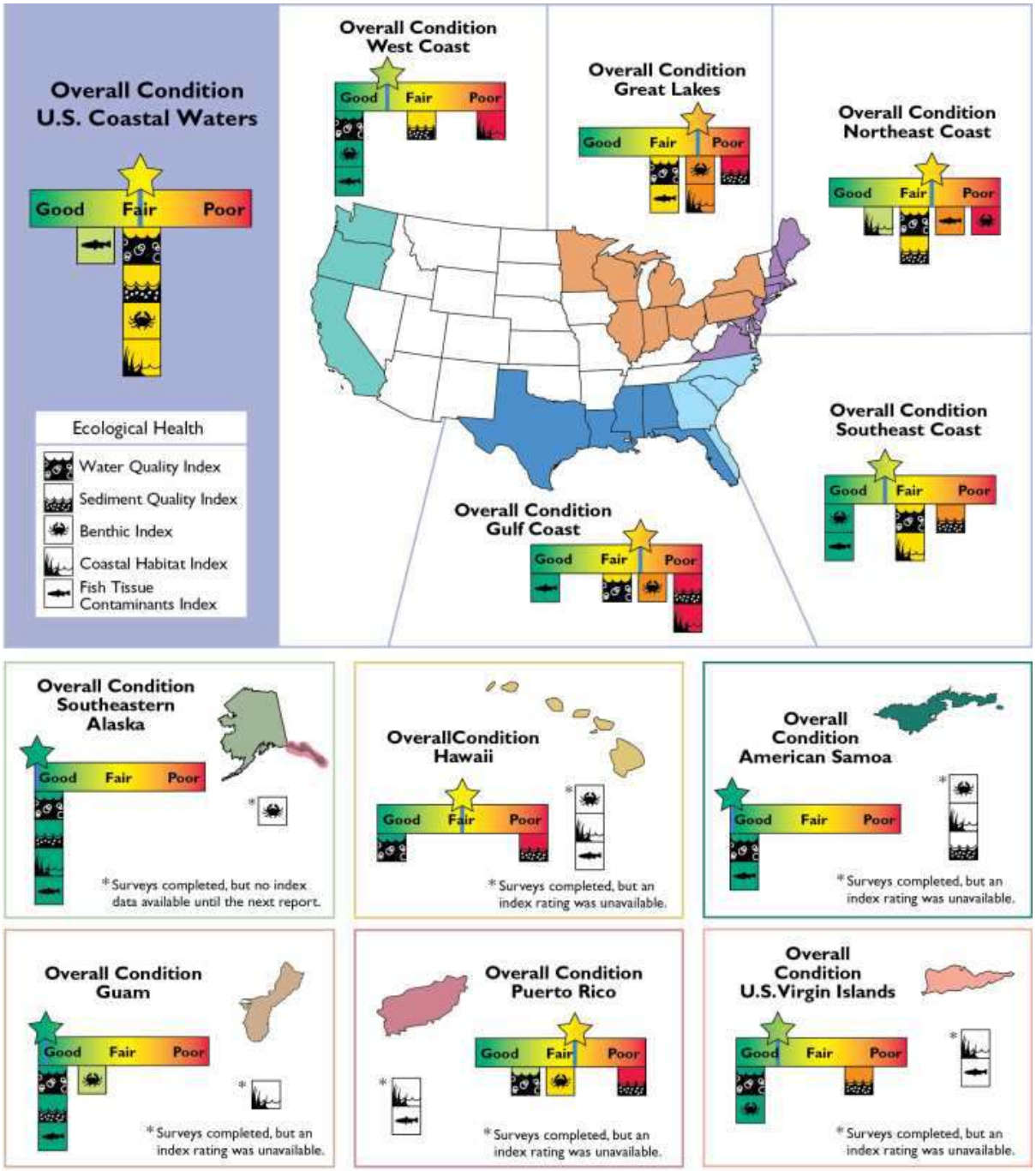


Figure 45: NCCR Scores

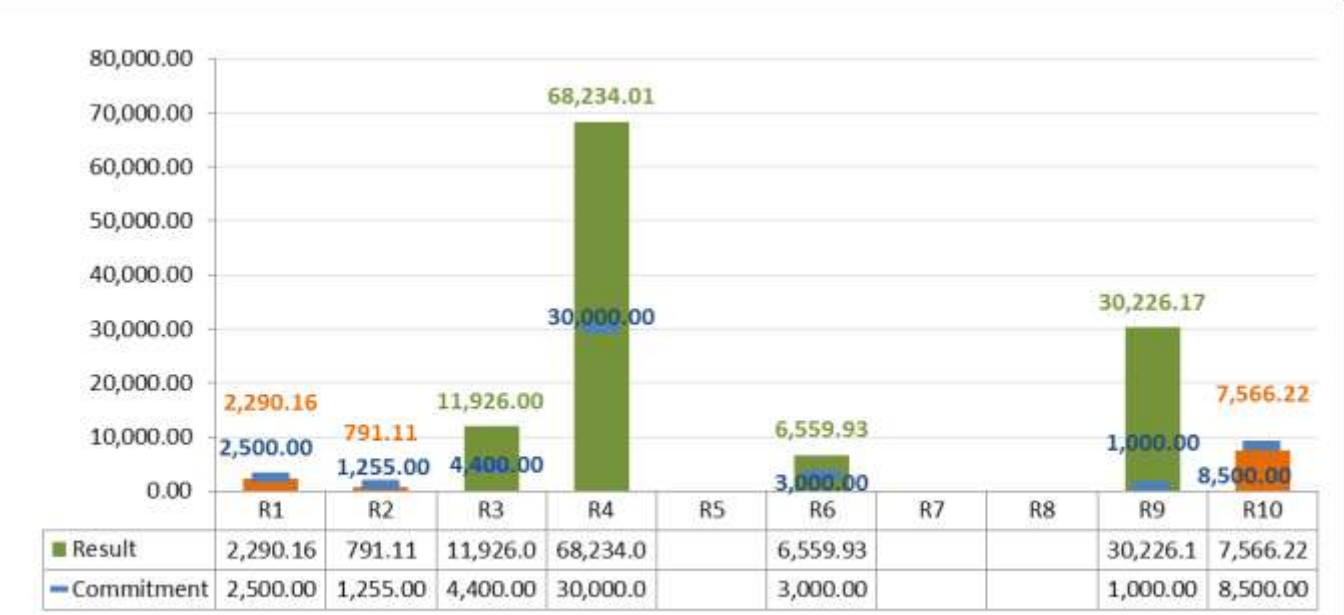
Category	NCCR I	NCCR II	NCCR III[a]	NCCR III[b]	NCCR IV[c]	NCCR IV[d]
Water Quality Index	1.5	3.2	3.2	3.8	3.2	3.6
Sediment Quality Index	2.3	2.1	1.6	2.8	1.8	2.6
Coastal Habitat Index	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.6
Benthic Index	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.4	2.4
Fish Tissue Contaminants Index	3.1	2.7	2.9	3.7	3.7	4.0
Overall Condition	**2.0**	**2.3**	**2.3**	**2.8**	**2.5**	**3.0**

[a] NCCR III scores excluding Alaska and Hawaii
[b] NCCR III scores including Alaska and Hawaii (except for coastal habitat index)
[c] NCCR IV scores excluding Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and U.S. Virgin Islands
[d] NCCR IV scores including Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and U.S. Virgin Islands

National Estuary Program (NEP): The 28 NEPs and their partners protected or restored more than **127,594 acres** of habitat within the NEP study areas—more than 27,000 acres above EPA's goal of 100,000 acres (Measure 4.3.2) (Figure 46). The target was exceeded due to the completion of several large projects to protect habitat acres through conservation easements in Region 4. Also, it is often difficult to predict the completion date of protection and restoration projects because of the many factors or steps required for each project, such as coordinating with numerous partners, negotiating with landowners, obtaining all the funding from multiple sources, having the necessary permits approved, and variability in the weather. Many of the acres protected this year were by easements (restoration projects have become more expensive and time consuming in recent years). Four of seven EPA Regions met their 2013 commitments, the other three missed their targets by only a small number (about 1% of the total). (Region 5, 7, and 8 do not have NEPs).

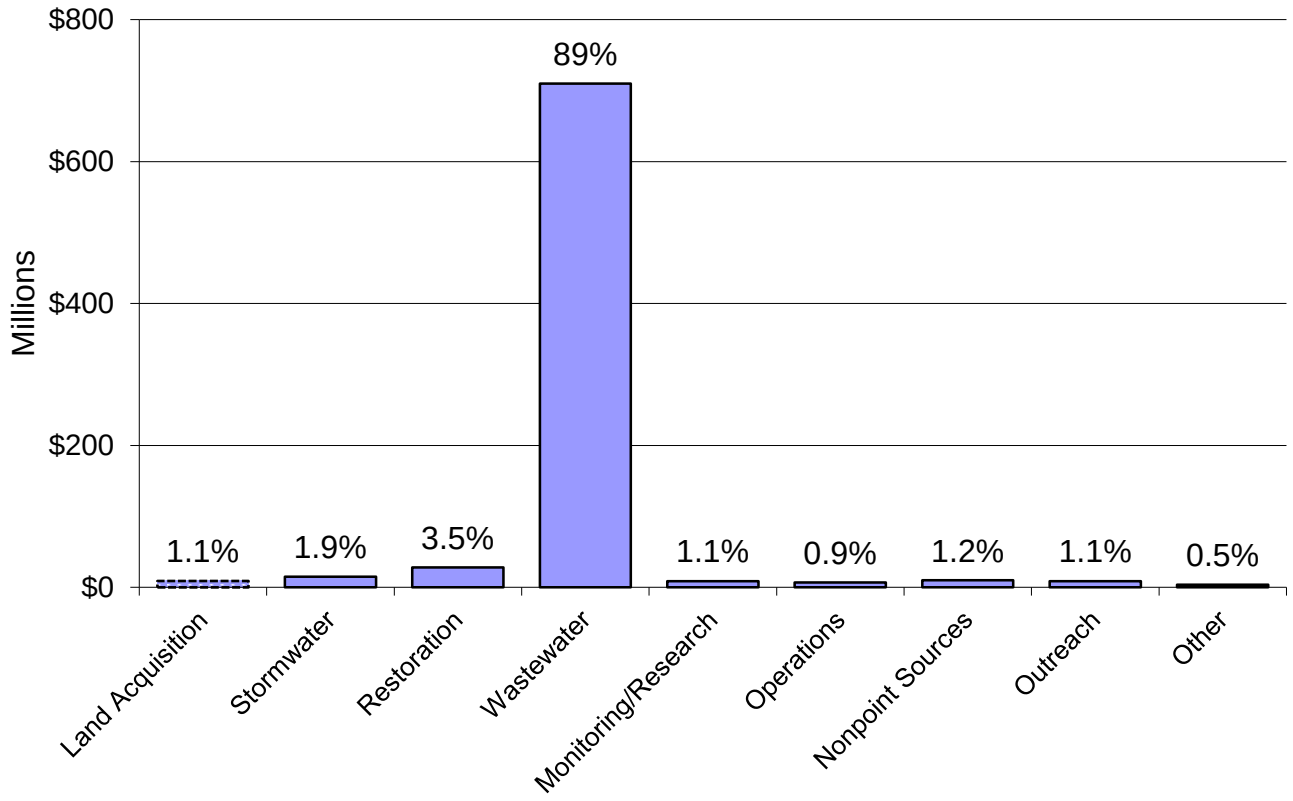
Figure 46: NEP Acres Protected or Restored by Fiscal Year (CO-432.N11)

Figure 47: NEP Acres Protected or Restored (CO-432.N11) by Region for FY 2012



In FY 2013, the 28 NEPs played the primary role in directing **$1.3 billion** in additional funds—leveraged from approximately $21 million in EPA Section 320 and earmark funds—toward Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) implementation. This represents a ratio of $39 raised for every $1 provided by EPA, which exceeds the historic ratio of $15:$1 measured over the 2003–2012 period (CO-4). The leveraged funds were primarily invested in sewage treatment plan upgrades. Approximately 99% of these leveraged resources were invested in on-the-ground activities, such as waste water, habitat restoration and stormwater management, rather than overhead or operations (Figure 48).

Figure 48: NEP Primary Leveraging Investments (CO-4): 2013 *($801 million total)*



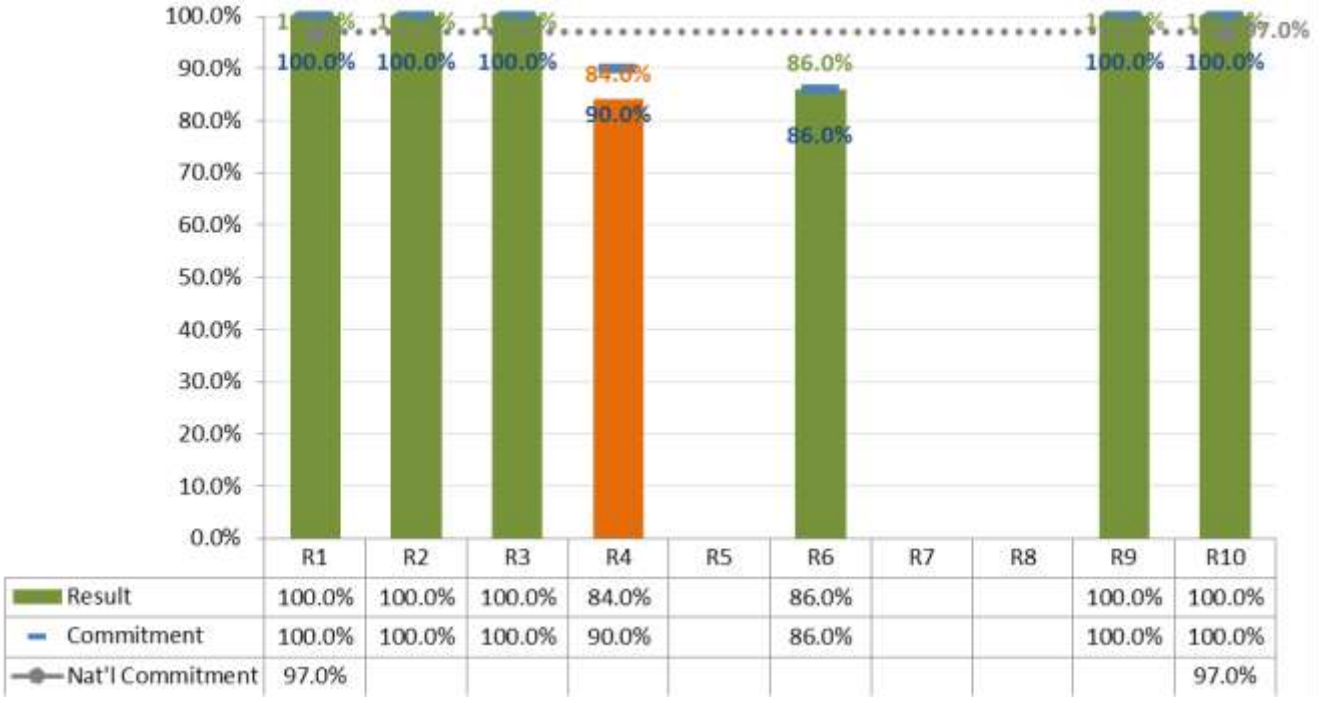
Ocean Protection: Every year, several hundred million cubic yards of sediment are dredged from waterways, ports, and harbors to maintain the nation's navigation system. Some of this dredged material is disposed in the ocean. EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) share responsibility for regulating the disposal of dredged material in ocean waters under the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA). The MPRSA prohibits the dumping of material into the ocean that would unreasonably degrade or endanger human health or the marine environment. The decision to issue an MPRSA permit for dredged material is made by the COE, using EPA's environmental criteria for the evaluation of MPRSA permit applications and subject to EPA concurrence. EPA is also responsible for designating and managing ocean disposal sites. All disposal sites must have a site management and monitoring plan.

In FY 2013, **96%** of active ocean dumping sites for dredged material achieved environmentally acceptable conditions, as reflected in each site's management plan and measured through onsite monitoring programs. The FY13 result was slightly below the annual commitment of 97% and the FY 2012 result (SP-20) (Figure 49). The FY 2013 result showed a slight decrease in the Region 4 result due to conditions at three of the Region's active dredged material disposal sites (Figure 50)., The Gulfport Western site exceeded its minimum depth limitation, the Miami site has elevated PCB levels, and dredged material was found outside of the boundaries of the Jacksonville disposal site. The Gulfport Western and Miami sites were previously reported as not meeting environmentally acceptable conditions, and the conditions at the Jacksonville site are new for FY 2013.

Figure 49: Ocean Dumping Sites with Acceptable Conditions by Fiscal Year (CO-SP20.N11)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Result	99.0%	99.0%	90.1%	93.0%	97.0%	96.0%
Commitment	95.4%	98.0%	98.0%	98.0%	96.0%	97.0%

Figure 50: Ocean Dumping Sites with Acceptable Conditions by Region for FY 2013 (CO-SP20.N11)



	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
Result	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	84.0%		86.0%			100.0%	100.0%
Commitment	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%		86.0%			100.0%	100.0%
Nat'l Commitment	97.0%									97.0%

The number of monitored active ocean disposal sites increased from 35 in 2012 to 40 in 2013 (CO-6). The number of disposal sites monitored on an annual basis depends on a number of factors, including resources available for monitoring in a given year, and will vary from year to year.