Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Framework

Since the formal establishment of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB) in April of 2013, the MidA RPB has been identifying needs and opportunities that can be addressed through regional ocean planning. This document offers, for public review, the MidA RPB's draft framework for regional ocean planning. The framework will inform how the MidA RPB moves forward with ocean planning by articulating a vision, principles, goals, objectives, example actions, and a proposed geographic focus.

Public feedback and ideas about this draft framework will help the MidA RPB ensure it is accounting for the full diversity of ocean interests in the region. To provide input on this draft framework, please send comments in writing to MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov by April 15, 2014. To facilitate a regional dialogue, the MidA RPB is planning a variety of in-person and online public input opportunities for early 2014. Details about these opportunities will be posted on the MidA RPB website at www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/ in the coming weeks. Members of the public can also request to receive email updates from the MidA RPB by sending a message to MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov.

Definitions of the terms used in this document are as follows:

- **Vision:** Desired future state for the Mid-Atlantic ocean.
- **Principles:** Basic or essential qualities or elements determining the intrinsic nature or characteristic behavior of regional ocean planning. Principles describe how the MidA RPB intends to operate.
- **Goals:** Statements of general direction or intent. Goals are high-level statements of the desired outcomes the MidA RPB hopes to achieve.
- **Objectives:** Statements of specific outcomes or observable changes that contribute to the achievement of a goal.
- **Actions:** Specific activities that Federal, State, and Tribal agencies may take, individually or together, to address the stated objectives.
- **Geographic Focus:** The area of focus for MidA RPB planning and coordination efforts.

About Mid-Atlantic regional ocean planning

Regional ocean planning will improve our understanding of how the Mid-Atlantic ocean and its resources are being used, managed, and conserved; and guide planning to address current challenges and emerging opportunities. Regional ocean planning will help guide resource conservation and economic development by facilitating information sharing, fostering collaboration, and improving decision-making about a growing number of ocean uses vying for ocean resources and space. Partnerships with stakeholders will be critical to the success of this planning effort.

The regional ocean planning process **does *not* change** existing authorities or create new mandates. Rather, it aims to improve the efficiency of those authorities as well as effectiveness of the mandates being implemented by the Federal agencies with jurisdictions in the Mid-Atlantic ocean.

Key elements of regional ocean planning include:

- Identify shared regional goals and objectives to guide decision-making by Federal, State and Tribal entities, informed by stakeholder engagement and input.
- Provide participation by ocean stakeholders and the public.
- Build upon all relevant work at the regional, State, Tribal, and local levels.
- Identify emerging issues and account for the needs of both current and future generations, while remaining mindful of traditional uses.
- Efficiently use constrained public resources, while leveraging investments with private-sector partnerships.
- Consult scientists, technical, and other experts in conducting regional ocean planning and developing ocean planning products.
- Inform data collection and analyses to better understand the potential benefits and risks of decisions.
- Compile a regional assessment of ocean uses, natural resources, and economic and cultural factors to provide a comprehensive understanding and context for ocean planning.
- Use enhanced collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions and with stakeholders to avoid disputes and facilitate compatibility wherever possible. In order to resolve disputes that do arise, the MidA RPB will emphasize use of collaborative, mediative approaches in an effort to avoid costly, formal dispute resolution mechanisms and find solutions that meet the interests of multiple parties.

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal is an online toolkit and resource center that consolidates available data and enables users to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites, among others. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) initiated and oversees the portal in close coordination with the Portal Project Team, using funds provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Regional Ocean Partnership funding program. For more information, please visit: http://portal.midatlanticocean.org/portal/

About the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

Regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic is led by the MidA RPB, which includes representatives from Federal, State, Tribal, and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council entities, as listed below.

- The six Mid-Atlantic States: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia
- The Shinnecock Indian Nation
- The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
- Eight Federal agencies:
  - Department of Agriculture (represented by the Natural Resources Conservation Service)
  - Department of Commerce (represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
  - Department of Defense (represented by the U.S. Navy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff)
  - Department of Energy
  - Department of Homeland Security (represented by the U.S. Coast Guard)
  - Department of the Interior (represented by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management)
  - Department of Transportation (represented by the Maritime Administration)
  - Environmental Protection Agency

To learn more about the MidA RPB and to view recent and historic postings, please visit www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/index.aspx

Role of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

The MidA RPB provides a forum for coordination of ocean planning activities in the region. As part of the regional ocean planning process, the MidA RPB plans to do the following:

- Develop a work plan that describes strategies and activities designed to achieve the MidA RPB goals and objectives.
- Compile a capacity assessment to identify existing activities that are relevant to ocean planning.
- Complete a regional ocean assessment to provide baseline information for ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic that takes into account current trends and forecasts about changing ocean uses and ecosystems.
- Consider developing a forward looking ocean plan to foster enhanced coordination on ocean management and stewardship across jurisdictions. The purpose and content of such a plan would be determined by the MidA RPB in collaboration with stakeholders.

DRAFT Description of Initial Geographic Focus

The MidA RPB proposes that the primary geographic focus area for regional ocean planning at this time be the ocean waters of the region. This means:

- From the shoreline out to 200 miles (EEZ), which includes State and Federal waters
- The northern limit would be the NY/CT and NY/RI border
- The southern limit would be the VA/NC border

The RPB does not anticipate including in its planning efforts the major bays and estuaries of the Mid-Atlantic. However, where necessary, the MidA RPB will draw connections and coordinate with estuarine and terrestrial areas for planning purposes, particularly in such cases where ocean uses may impact coastal communities, estuaries, and ports or other shore side infrastructure. Coordination and collaboration with Regional Planning Bodies and other entities in the Northeast and South-Atlantic, including leveraging of resources, will also be essential for success. The RPB will consider further refining the geographic focus as goals and objectives are determined, as informed by public input.

DRAFT Vision

The draft vision is intended to articulate the RPB's desired future state for the Mid-Atlantic ocean:

A Mid-Atlantic ocean where safe and responsible use and stewardship support healthy, productive, resilient, and treasured natural and economic ocean resources that provide for the wellbeing and prosperity of present and future generations.

DRAFT Principles

The Mid-Atlantic ocean planning efforts would be guided by the following overarching principles:

Principle 1 (Recognize Interconnections) – The MidA RPB will facilitate an approach to managing ocean resources that recognizes and considers the interconnections across human uses and interests, marine species and habitats, and coastal communities and economies.

Principle 2 (Compatibility of multiple interests) – The MidA RPB will coordinate in making information available to support economic development and ecosystem conservation so that multiple interests can co-exist in a manner that reduces conflict and enhances compatibility.

Principle 3 (Improving resilience) – The MidA RPB will consider the risks and vulnerabilities associated with past, present, and predicted ocean and coastal hazards (e.g., erosion, extreme weather, and sea level rise) and predicted changes to temperature and ocean acidification to protect Mid-Atlantic ocean and coastal communities, users, and natural features.

Principle 4 (Sound science) – The MidA RPB will consider sound science and traditional knowledge in decision-making.

Principle 5 (Adaptive management) – The MidA RPB will apply a flexible and adaptive approach in accommodating changing environmental conditions, advances in science and technology, and new or revised laws and policies.

Principle 6 (Consistency with existing laws) – MidA RPB actions will be consistent with Federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and treaties, and with State laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and treaties where applicable.

Principle 7 (Coordination and government efficiency) – The MidA RPB will serve as a forum to increase inter-jurisdictional coordination to facilitate efficient and effective management of Mid-Atlantic ocean uses and resources consistent with regional needs. Such coordination will extend to partners and issues in adjacent uplands, in the Northeast and South Atlantic, and international waters to the east.

Principle 8 (Transparency and engagement) – MidA RPB processes and products will benefit from meaningful public input, be designed to be easily understood by all, and allow stakeholders to participate and understand when and how decisions are reached that affect their lives.

Principle 9: (Intrinsic value) – The MidA RPB will respect the intrinsic value of the ocean and its biodiversity, at the same time recognizing humans as part of the ecosystem and dependent on the health of the ecosystem for our own well-being.

DRAFT Mid-Atlantic Ocean Planning Goals and Objectives

Mid-Atlantic ocean planning goals will be high-level statements of the desired outcomes the MidA RPB hopes to achieve. Objectives will describe specific outcomes and observable changes that contribute to the achievement of ocean planning goals. They are intended to serve as guideposts for the focus and work of the MidA RPB. Draft ocean planning goals and draft objectives are offered below for public feedback, and include articulation of some example actions that could be taken by the MidA RPB to achieve the draft goals and objectives for illustrative purposes.

DRAFT Ocean Planning Goal 1:
Promote ocean ecosystem health and integrity through conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration.

Note: Goal #1 focuses on protecting and conserving our ocean and coastal resources through efforts that improve our understanding of ocean resources and habitats, account for ecosystem changes, consider traditional values and scientific data in regional ocean planning, and foster collaboration across jurisdictions around ocean conservation efforts.

Draft objectives:

1) (*Understanding, protecting and restoring key habitats*) Enhance understanding of Mid-Atlantic ocean habitats and physical, geological, chemical, and biological ocean resources through improved scientific understanding and assessments of the effects of ocean uses. Foster collaboration and coordination for protection and restoration of critical ocean and coastal habitats.

   Example action: Map and characterize canyon habitats in the Mid-Atlantic region. Identify Federal, State and Tribal habitat protection and restoration initiatives to leverage partnerships that maximize the opportunity for success.

2) (*Accounting for ocean ecosystem changes and increased risks*) Facilitate enhanced understanding of and take into account in decision-making current and anticipated ocean ecosystem changes in the Mid-Atlantic. These include ocean-related risks and vulnerabilities associated with ocean warming (including sea level rise, coastal flooding/inundation), ocean acidification (including effects on living marine resources), and changes in ocean wildlife migration and habitat use.

   Example actions: Coordinate the collection and understanding of information needed to adjust human use activities in certain ocean areas in response to changing migratory pathways of marine life. Coordinate information sharing regarding sea level rise and ocean acidification in order to inform management of living marine resources and coastal communities and industries dependent on them.

3) (*Valuing traditional knowledge of the ecosystem*) Pursue greater understanding and acknowledgment of traditional knowledge along with other cultural values, and incorporate such knowledge and values in the ocean planning process.

   Example action: Include traditional ecological knowledge and consideration of local cultural values in regional capacity assessment.

DRAFT Ocean Planning Goal 2:
Plan and provide for existing and emerging ocean uses in a sustainable manner that reduces conflicts, improves efficiency and regulatory predictability, and supports economic growth.

Note: Goal #2 focuses on fostering coordination, transparency, and use of quality information to support accommodation of existing, new, and future ocean uses in a manner that reduces conflict and enhances compatibility. The MidA RPB has chosen to organize the draft objectives under Goal 2 by sector to facilitate initial data collection, future needs assessment, and highlight how the proposed actions will affect key stakeholders. During the subsequent phases of the ocean planning process, application of the principles articulated above calls for considering various sectors and concerns in an integrated, holistic, and collaborative manner. The MidA RPB intends to provide the means for decision-makers to implement their programs and authorities in an integrated way.

Draft objectives, organized by sector:

1) (*National security*) Account for national security interests in the Mid-Atlantic through enhanced coordination and sharing of information across agencies.

   Example action: Consider military needs and preferences early in decision-making processes to avoid potential conflicts with proposed ocean activities and current and planned military training and testing areas.

2) (*Ocean energy*) Facilitate greater collaboration around ocean energy issues in the Mid-Atlantic.

   Example action: Coordinate data collection for environmental assessment to inform development of new offshore renewable energy projects.

3) (*Commercial and recreational fishing*) Foster greater understanding of the needs of Mid-Atlantic fishers and fishing communities in the context of the full range of ocean uses and conservation efforts.

   Example action: Identify areas of high fish productivity and high usage to inform management of ocean uses and habitat areas.

4) (*Ocean aquaculture*) Inform ocean aquaculture siting and permitting in the Mid-Atlantic through greater coordination among stakeholders and management authorities to address compatibility issues.

   Example action: Facilitate interagency coordination regarding ocean aquaculture permitting.

5) (*Maritime commerce and navigation*) Enhance coordination to ensure new and updated nautical information and navigation practices at local, regional, and international levels are considered in regional ocean planning.

   Example action: Coordinate information about new and proposed revisions to existing maritime corridors in the Mid-Atlantic, taking into account global and regional trends in maritime commerce.

6) (*Offshore sand management*) Facilitate enhanced coordination among coastal jurisdictions, Federal and State regulatory agencies, and Tribal entities on the use of sand and gravel resources in the Mid-Atlantic.

   Example action: Coordinate regional identification and prioritization of sand borrow sites in Federal and State waters.

7) (*Non-consumptive recreation*) Coordinate improved understanding of near-shore and offshore non-consumptive recreational uses in the Mid-Atlantic to inform management of ocean activities and resources that may impact those activities (e.g., surfing, boating, whale watching, birding, diving).

   Example action: Share data about ocean areas important for recreational activity and recreational user perceptions on issues such as siting of ocean renewable energy facilities.

8) (*Tribal uses*) Recognize and take into account important Tribal uses and submerged cultural resources in the planning process.

   Example action: Document and foster shared understanding of ocean and coastal sites important to Tribal use, beliefs, and values related to the Mid-Atlantic ocean.

9) (*Critical ocean infrastructure*) Facilitate greater understanding of the current and potential future location of submerged infrastructure, such as submarine cables (e.g., for communication and electricity) and pipelines.

   Example action: Engage the submarine cables and submerged pipelines industries to understand their current and projected needs for ocean space, and conduct an inventory of obsolete structures.

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