

# Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Public Listening Sessions Summary: November 2014

*This document summarizes presentations and discussions at the five public listening sessions hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) between November 5, 2014, and November 18, 2014. This document also captures a synthesis of comments offered verbally by members of the public at each of these listening sessions. Written input submitted to the Mid-Atlantic RPB is not included in this summary, and is available on the RPB's website at <http://www.boem.gov/Written-Public-Comments-Submitted-to-the-MidA-RPB/>. The summary was developed by Meridian Institute, which provides process design, meeting planning, and facilitation services to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB) and MARCO.*

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## Introduction

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB or RPB) released three draft documents for public comment on October 24, 2014, including:

- *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Options*
- *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Stakeholder Engagement Plan*
- *Status of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment*

These documents were developed by internal MidA RPB workgroups to inform and support the RPB's thinking in preparation for the next in-person meeting scheduled for January 21-22, 2015, at which the RPB will identify an approach to developing a regional ocean action plan (OAP) and next steps for developing a work plan. In order to effectively gather substantive stakeholder input on each of these draft documents and on the regional ocean planning process generally, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) hosted five public listening sessions throughout the region. The public listening sessions were held at the following dates, times, and locations:

- Wednesday, November 5 in Lewes, Delaware from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.
- Thursday, November 6 in Virginia Beach, Virginia from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.
- Monday, November 10 in Ocean City, Maryland from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.
- Monday, November 17 in Stony Brook, New York from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.
- Tuesday, November 18 in Long Branch, New Jersey from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Approximately 142 individuals in total attended the public listening sessions including members of the public, State and Federal agencies, representatives of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) staff, and

members of the MARCO Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (Portal) team. Of these, 100 were members of the public.

### Meeting Objectives

The objectives of each public listening session were to:

- Provide Mid-Atlantic stakeholders with an update about regional ocean planning activities in the Mid-Atlantic region, focusing on draft documents released for public review and comment, including:
  - *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Options,*
  - *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Stakeholder Engagement Plan,* and
  - *Status of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment.*
- Discuss the role and functionality of the MARCO Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal as a tool to support ocean planning.
- Receive input and answer questions from stakeholders about regional ocean planning generally and the draft materials released for public input.

### Presentations

Each public listening session followed a similar format. Federal and State representatives of the MidA RPB and members of the Portal team presented a brief history of the MidA RPB, an overview of MidA RPB activities and progress since the May 20-21, 2014 in-person meeting, detailed discussions of each of the three draft documents released for public review, and recent updates and activities related to the Portal. The presentations offered can be found on the MidA RPB's website at: <http://www.boem.gov/MidA-RPB-Public-Listening-Sessions-November-2014/>.

At each of the listening sessions, the RPB members representing the host state (i.e., Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, New York, and New Jersey respectively) welcomed the meeting participants, described the relevance of regional ocean planning to their states, and introduced the MidA RPB members, alternates, and staff present at each session. State hosts at each session included:

- *Delaware:* John Clark, Environmental Program Administrator, Delaware Department of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries Section and Sarah Cooksey, Administrator, Delaware Coastal Programs
- *Virginia:* John Bull, Commissioner, Virginia Marine Resources Commission and Laura McKay, Program Manager, Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program
- *Maryland:* Catherine McCall, Director, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Coastal and Marine Assessment Division and Gwynne Schultz, Senior Coastal and Ocean Policy Advisor, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

- *New York*: Karen Chytalo, Assistant Bureau Chief, New York Department of Environmental Conservation and Mike Snyder, Policy Analyst, New York Department of State
- *New Jersey*: Elizabeth Semple, Manager, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Office of Coastal and Land Use Planning

State hosts and/or Federal representatives began by describing the establishment of the MidA RPB in April 2013 pursuant to the National Ocean Policy established by President Obama in 2010. The RPB is an intergovernmental body that coordinates and implements regional ocean planning among the six Mid-Atlantic States, Shinnecock Indian Nation, eight federal agencies, and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The purpose of regional ocean planning is to carry out coordinated efforts to address current challenges and emerging opportunities through a collaborative process among the MidA RPB member entities. This process is designed to guide resource conservation and economic development by facilitating information sharing, fostering coordination, and improving decision-making about a growing number of ocean uses. The presenters highlighted that the RPB is *not* a regulatory body and has *no* independent legal authority. The MidA RPB has held two in-person meetings to date in September 2013 and May 2014, and has approved the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Framework* (Framework) and the *Charter for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body* (Charter), both of which are available on the RPB's website at <http://www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/MidA-RPB-Materials.aspx>.

The presenters then reviewed an updated timeline of MidA RPB activities over the coming months. Since the last in-person meeting, the RPB formed several internal workgroups to develop:

- options for the content and structure of the OAP,
- a strategy for improving interjurisdictional coordination among MidA RPB member institutions,
- an interim plan to engage stakeholders, including strategies for coordinating with entities working on issues related to bays, estuaries, and coasts,
- a regional ocean assessment, and
- continued development of and connections to the Portal to provide up-to-date data to inform regional ocean planning.

At the in-person meeting scheduled for January 21-22, 2015, the MidA RPB will seek to make a decision about an approach to the OAP, and then will create a work plan to guide development of the OAP throughout 2015 and 2016. The MidA RPB is targeting late 2016 as the deadline to submit a first iteration OAP for review by the National Ocean Council and will focus on initiating implementation sometime in 2017. The RPB will refine the OAP on a periodic basis.

After the context-setting presentation, the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Options* document was presented by Leann Bullin, Program Manager, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) (in Delaware), Laura McKay (in Virginia), Joe Atangan, Physical Scientist, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, U.S. Navy, Joint Chiefs of Staff (in Maryland), Karen Chytalo (in New York), and Kevin Hassell, Principal Environmental Specialist, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Coastal Management Office (in New Jersey). Each respective presenter described the five options developed for consideration, the MidA RPB's assessment of the relative practicality of those options, the specific details included in each of the three preferred options and distinctions among them, and an outline of how the content and structure of a plan could appear under each of the different options. Presenters emphasized the fact that if members of the audience favored specific elements of each option, suggestions for hybrid options were welcomed.

The OAP options presentation was followed by a discussion of the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Stakeholder Engagement Plan*, which was presented by Renee Searfoss, Ocean and Dredge Disposal Team Lead, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 3 (in Delaware, Virginia), Catherine McCall (in Maryland), and Doug Pabst, Chief, Dredging, Sediments, and Oceans Section and Sandy Recovery Green Team, EPA Region 2 (in New York, New Jersey). The draft document is designed to serve as a precursor to a more detailed stakeholder engagement plan which will be part of the work plan to be developed in early 2015, and as written, outlines the MidA RPB's approach to stakeholder engagement, offers options for public participation, outlines a range of tools and methods for discussion by the RPB and stakeholders, and provides specific topics on which RPB members seek to gather input from stakeholders through a range of engagement opportunities. The presenters also described the activities of an earlier MidA RPB workgroup focused on coordination with entities that manage bays and estuaries as an example of how the RPB will build on and coordinate on existing management efforts throughout the region.

The final public document discussed was the *Status of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment*, presented by Sarah Cooksey of Delaware Coastal Programs (in Delaware), Kevin Chu, Assistant Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) (in Virginia, Maryland), Karen Chytalo (in New York), and Darlene Finch, Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator, Coastal Services Center, NOAA (in New Jersey). The presenters defined a regional ocean assessment (ROA) as a compilation of the best available physical, biological, and socio-economic information in the region in order to understand the condition and use of that area to inform planning. The presenters then discussed progress in the development of the MidA RPB's ROA, including reviewing the proposed topics for inclusion, the proposed template for gathering information on each of those topics, and connections between the ROA and the Portal. The presenters posed a series of specific questions for stakeholder feedback to help guide input on the ROA and target discussion at each session.

The presentations concluded with a description and update about the Portal, which is an online resource to visualize and analyze data related to ocean ecosystems and human resources. Updates about recent activities and the use of Portal data were offered by Tony MacDonald, Director, Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute (in Delaware, New Jersey), Jay Odell, Director, Mid-Atlantic Marine Program, the Nature Conservancy (in Virginia, Maryland), and Al Lombana, Marine Scientist, the Nature Conservancy (in New York). The presentations focused on how the Portal team is working to fill key data gaps to focus on regional priorities and meet regional data needs. More information about the Portal is available at <http://portal.midatlanticocean.org/portal/>.

Following the presentations at each session, Selena Elmer of Meridian Institute facilitated a discussion with members of the public to elicit feedback on the regional ocean planning process generally and specific comments and questions related to each of the three draft documents.

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## Public Comments/Questions about Draft Documents

A synthesis of the comments received at each public listening session related to the draft documents and the regional ocean planning process generally are included below. Those comments listed under “Prominent Themes” were offered by more than one member of the public, and comments listed under “Additional Comments/Questions” were offered by one individual or organization.

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## Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Options

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan* draft document.

### Prominent Themes

- Desire for additional clarity about the difference between the options, including use of examples and, where possible, supplemental simplified language.
- Support for hybridizing the existing *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Options* to allow the RPB to focus both on specific geographies and region-wide issues through a variety of tools and approaches that can be applied as appropriate to different circumstances/issues/geographies.
- Support for the compatibility assessment described in Options B and D to be incorporated as a tool in any approach ultimately chosen.
- Requests for improved clarity about the connection between the OAP options, the Regional Ocean Assessment (ROA), and further analysis needed to begin developing a plan.

- Caution that any approach undertaken should avoid a sector-by-sector focus and should maintain a sufficiently broad scope to enable coordination on region-wide issues.
- Requests to use an ecological base layer identified through the ROA or other analysis to determine ecologically important areas and ensure the OAP leads to improved protection of them.
- Skepticism about the necessity of the process and potential for it to lead to additional regulation, and requests to halt the planning process without pursuing any of the options further.
- Support within parts of the environmental community for optimal use designation to equip the government with additional tools to justify rejecting proposals for certain activities in certain areas.
- Requests for improved clarity about what process or criteria would be used to select the initial set of region-wide issues or specific geographies of a first iteration plan.
- Concern that any of the options presented would prioritize some uses over others and/or that the RPB would recommend use changes.
- Desire for existing uses to be properly accounted for to inform planning under any of the listed options.
- Desire for additional clarity about the results of plan implementation. In particular, concerns were expressed about the potential implications of changes in business practices among MidA RPB member entities, including concerns that these would occur outside of normal agency procedures or without sufficient opportunity for public input.
- Preference for a cycle of plan updates that would provide sufficient time for establishment and observation of changed business practices (e.g., no fewer than 5 or even 10 years) and avoid fatigue that could result from frequent updates. However, this update cycle would also need to account for the timely addition of new topics to the OAP as they emerge (which would potentially need to happen more frequently than every 5 or 10 years).

### **Additional Comments/Questions**

- Question about how each of these options would improve the status quo in addressing ocean use conflicts.
- Request for clarification about whether Option D would allow an optimal use to be identified for a specific area.
- Request for a means to compare options with the approaches Massachusetts and Rhode Island took in State-based ocean planning endeavors.
- Request to incorporate temporal data into a plan rather than only focusing on spatial and issue-based elements.

- Support for prioritizing uses that protect the environment and ecosystem health.
- Support for eliminating the status quo ad hoc processes for permitting.
- Suggestion that successful ocean planning in a particular geographic area (i.e. pilot projects) might lead to increased support for the RPB's work in other geographies. If others outside a pilot geography see demonstrable results, desire to undertake a similar exercise in other areas could increase.
- Further clarification that the RPB would need to be methodical and strategic in selecting any pilot project areas (e.g., choose three areas with uses of relevance to all Mid-Atlantic States).
- Appreciation for the inclusion of the monitoring section in the OAP outline.
- Suggestion that the RPB start with a basic biological assessment of the region and use that baseline as a platform to prioritize the sectors, habitats, and species most urgently needing attention, while maintaining flexibility to address other issues that emerge over time.
- Suggestion to ask sectors to prepare white papers before the RPB conducts a compatibility assessment. These would be shared among sectors and improve general understanding of each sector's perceived needs and projected future plans in the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Suggestion to focus any compatibility analysis only on targeted situations because the compatibility of certain uses is in constant flux.
- Request to include any legal compliance requirements or ramifications resulting from any option selected, and further clarify how the RPB will integrate this planning effort from state to state.
- Desire for clarification about why the RPB considers Option E impractical.
- Skepticism about the extent to which plan development would influence permitting and siting decisions in the ocean.

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## Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Plan for Stakeholder Engagement

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Plan for Stakeholder Engagement* draft document.

### Prominent Themes

- Appreciation for the RPB's development of a stakeholder engagement plan.
- Interest in workshop-style meetings to enable further substantive discussions and exchanges between RPB members and members of the public in a less formal setting

than the formal in-person RPB business meetings. For example, workshops similar to that held by the Northeast RPB in October 2014 in New Hampshire.

- Requests for the RPB to hold topic-specific webinars (e.g., on specific subjects like the OAP options or the ROA), potentially with several time options available for each topic.
- Desire for clearer pathways for the scientific community to contribute to the process and provide substantive feedback on specific documents and products (e.g., the ROA).
- Desire for increased public visibility of MidA RPB activities and the regional ocean planning process in general. This could potentially include increased exposure of the RPB process via mainstream media (e.g., National Public Radio) in an effort to engage with news sources most visible to stakeholders.
- Interest in identification of specific opportunities for the MidA RPB to leverage partner organizations' and RPB member institutions' communications capacities.

### **Additional Comments/Questions**

- Request that the next iteration of a stakeholder engagement plan contain information about how the RPB is going to execute the actions outlined in the current plan.
- Concern about whether and how the RPB receives input from industry representatives given that relatively few attended the public listening sessions.
- Desire for increased participation from the fishing community and potentially taking public meetings to locations convenient to them (e.g. holding meetings in Montauk, New York to reach Long Island Sound fishermen).
- Request for BOEM representatives to attend all listening sessions given the important role the agency plays in planning for and regulating a number of important current and potential ocean uses.
- Recommendation that the RPB develop a communications plan.
- Request to open workgroup discussions to the public and/or provide minutes from those meetings to further inform stakeholders' understanding of the RPB's processes.
- Request for a declaration in the RPB charter about the relationship between MARCO and the RPB to clarify that the Stakeholder Liaison Committee (SLC) is hosted by MARCO and the mechanism through which the SLC contributes to the RPB process.
- Request for greater public involvement during RPB discussions and contributions to RPB decision-making beyond public listening sessions and comments at formal meetings, including "sitting at the table."
- Interest from the New York Aquarium in partnering with the RPB, including potentially helping relay key messages to its approximately four million visitors per year.
- Offer to put a link to the RPB website on the New York Marine Sciences Consortium website.

- Suggestion to reach out to Sea Grant programs for help in increasing RPB visibility.
  - Support for coordination with the various bays and estuary programs depicted on a specific slide from the listening session presentations.
  - Concern about how stakeholder engagement will be addressed as this planning process moves forward, including questions about whether the *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Interim Stakeholder Engagement Plan* would be approved/disapproved during the January meeting and whether it is designed to guide the RPB into the indefinite future or specifically during the development of the OAP.
  - Clarification about whether the RPB reached out to the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays for coordination purposes.
  - Support for the RPB to coordinate with local estuary program initiatives related to the National Ocean Policy.
  - Request to involve the Delaware Mobile Surf-Fishermen in planning efforts.
  - Indication that the Natural Resources Defense Council is interested in the topic of stakeholder engagement and has ideas for assisting in this arena, including a specific interest in helping the RPB identify ecologically important areas.
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## Status of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the *Status of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment* draft document.

### Prominent Themes

- Requests for additional clarity about how ROA topics and species were selected.
- Suggestions for the addition of several species to the ROA outline (these are listed below) and better integration of ecosystem-based management principles throughout that document, rather than as a specific topic.
- Emphasis on the importance of balancing usability/manageability of the ROA for its target audience (the RPB) with completeness/comprehensiveness.
- Desire for more direct references to community impacts of ocean uses and processes.
- Requests to develop a clearer role for members of the scientific community in providing feedback to inform the development and updating of the ROA.
- Support for the suggested approach of developing succinct summaries of each ROA section with additional links to authoritative sources, use of a digital platform, and “living document” design to be updated with new information as it becomes available.

- Recommendations to develop an ecological base layer for the entire region to inform analysis and identification of areas of special concern (e.g., ecologically important areas, habitats, and species) both temporally and spatially for RPB attention and to involve the scientific community in this process.
- Requests to not classify oil and gas development as a “sustainable” ocean use, or to further clarify the RPB’s definition of “sustainable” to avoid misinterpretation.

### **Additional Comments/Questions**

- Request to separate recreational and commercial fishing in the ROA.
- Request to include additional sea turtle species in the ROA.
- Request to add mollusks and lobster the ROA.
- Request to add sea scallops, tuna, and sharks to the ROA.
- Call to use natural biophony data in the planning process.
- Request to include any current marine conservation areas on the list of uses in the ROA, in the event such areas exist.
- Suggestion to add nuisance flooding to section 5.2 of the ROA document.
- Encouragement to include bays and estuaries somewhere in the ROA to investigate the interactions between bays and estuaries and salt water.
- Request to define “traditional knowledge,” and suggestion that this should include more than tribal knowledge (e.g. knowledge from other groups like fishermen).
- Clarification that good data exist on several species currently not included in the ROA, and the RPB needs to learn how to collect and use it.
- Clarification that the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (an RPB member) focuses on habitat and the representative from the Fishery Management Council will ensure that key habitat issues are addressed during RPB deliberations.
- Request to clarify how the ROA will be used in practice.
- Concern about how the RPB will ensure that the ROA includes best available information.
- Desire for a formal signoff on the ROA from members of the scientific community.
- Request for clarity about whether the RPB has a role in evaluating oil and gas as compared to other uses.
- Support for leaving oil and gas development in the ROA document with the understanding that all potential uses should be included in a planning discussion between member entities.

- Support for not including oil and gas development in the planning process at all and to not allow developers of that industry to have influence on data collection and analysis.
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## Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the activities of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.

### Prominent Themes

- Strong enthusiasm for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal as a tool to support and enhance regional ocean planning.
- Indication that collecting accurate and up-to-date data will be critical to the RPB's work.
- Support for use of the Portal as a tool to tell stories and increase accessibility of the planning process to specific stakeholders and sectors.
- Requests to build on and leverage available data that is not currently represented on the Portal.
- Desire to undertake analyses and/or combine data in order to visually demonstrate cumulative impacts of specific ocean uses on resources, species, and habitats.
- Support for continued and expanded collaboration with existing entities with relevant expertise (e.g., Mid-Atlantic Regional Association Coastal Ocean Observing System, MARACOOS) and exploration of tools that could help inform Portal development (e.g., U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service tools and other Federal and State resources).

### Additional Comments/Questions

- Inquiry about the resources required to maintain the Portal and whether there are sufficient funds available to keep it up-to-date over time.
- Support to distill data into one common metric (e.g., dollars) using integrated resource assessment as a model to help standardize the comparison of economic impacts, social impacts, and externalities.
- Suggestion that analysis should take a comprehensive look at the ocean, weighing all uses in all areas.
- Suggestion to build on The Nature Conservancy's Northwest Atlantic Marine Ecoregional Assessment (NAM ERA) study to identify data to support the development of an ecological base layer. The NAM ERA approach to ecoregional assessments uses frequency of occurrence of species over time as a predictor of ecological importance of an area.

- Concern about how Portal data could accurately display surf clam habitats off the coast of New Jersey since there are no discrete areas identified as such for surf clams.
  - Suggestion to incorporate technology like U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Information, Planning, and Conservation (IPaC) decision support system into the Portal.
  - Concern about the overreliance on Automatic Identification System (AIS) data because the tug and barge community needs the flexibility to change routes due to weather conditions and AIS data presents an incomplete picture of the width of tug and barge channels.
  - Concern about data privacy which mean that some data (e.g. some tribal data) is not publicly available.
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## General Public Comments/Question about Ocean Planning

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to regional ocean planning activities in general, and specific suggestions or ideas to inform the MidA RPB and MARCO.

### Prominent Themes

- Desire for clarified messaging and use of accessible language to increase degree of public understanding of complex policy topics considered by the RPB.
- Requests for the establishment of clear and consistent definitions of key words that could be interpreted differently by different audiences (e.g., sustainability, compatibility).
- Suggestions that improved clarity about the RPB's consensus process and decision-making could help reduce confusion about whether the RPB intends to prioritize certain sectors over others.
- Support for the MidA RPB as a forum for open discussion of challenging region-wide issues that affect multiple Federal agencies, States, Tribes, and stakeholders.
- Support for the RPB to proactively anticipate and develop strategies to address issues before they arise, rather than continuing to make decision in a reactive pattern that is the status quo.
- Support for leveraging and building on existing work to inform the regional ocean planning process (e.g., State-led ocean planning processes, work of estuary and bay management entities, activities of the Northeast Regional Planning Body).
- Support for proceeding with the suggested deadline of late 2016 (or sooner) for a first iteration OAP.

- Requests for clarification about the outcomes that the RPB hopes to accomplish in the long term.
- Desire for the RPB to develop a product and establish changes in business practices with demonstrable results to promote longevity of the planning process beyond 2016 and into future presidential administrations.
- Reminder that the RPB should consider impacts to end-users throughout the planning processes.
- Concerns about the impacts of seismic testing on marine mammals and a desire for greater clarity about the MidA RPB's role related to seismic testing, if any.
- Desire for increased clarity about how land-based issues affecting the ocean environment will or will not be accounted for in the MidA RPB's planning process.
- Particular concerns from several industry communities about the impacts of both offshore wind power development and construction of liquid natural gas terminals on several existing ocean uses (e.g., surf clamming, scalloping, shipping, recreational scuba diving, and tug and barge operation).
- Perception that the impetus behind the RPB activity is the recent interest in offshore wind power development.

#### **Additional Comments/Questions**

- Indication that there are abundant conflicts in the ocean requiring planning.
- Perception that there are few, if any, conflicts in the ocean.
- Concern that a discussion of the "drivers" for regional ocean planning is distracting, since the RPB's process should precede emergencies or severe issues to avoid decision-making under duress.
- Support for the RPB to anticipate potential future issues and emergent uses to inform the development of a plan that is both forward-looking and reflective of current ocean resources and uses.
- Request for clarity about the timeline of revision and release of updated public documents in preparation for the January 21-22, 2015 in-person meeting.
- Inquiry about how the RPB is funded and how it will be funded in the future.
- Suggestion that the standard for the RPB's Healthy Ocean Ecosystem goal identified in the Framework should be the ability to sustain sensitive species to sensitive life standards.
- Request for RPB members to clarify the example action listed under the second objective in the Healthy Ecosystem Goal of the Framework.
- Desire for the RPB to focus equal attention on the two goals identified in the Framework.

- Request for clarity about how member entities represented on the RPB were selected, which agencies are involved, and which other federal and state affiliated agencies are or are not represented.
- Frustration that most environmental impact statements find that there are no cumulative impacts on the ocean from proposed uses.
- Indication that the BOEM wind energy lease area off the coast of New York overlaps with the proposed site for a liquefied natural gas terminal.
- Suggestion that all proposed development in the ocean should be put on hold until the RPB approves a regional ocean action plan with a clear path forward.
- Request to include land-based issues in the RPB's scope.
- Request for the RPB's work to support and identify sustainable development for renewable ocean energy.
- Concern about the use of taxpayer dollars to support RPB activities since the RPB was not created by a legislative act.
- Request that a representative from the Army Corps of Engineers attend listening sessions and participate more actively in RPB activities.
- Inquiry about availability of the presentations from the listening sessions and the public webinar held on October 29, 2014 on the RPB's website.
- Perception that regional ocean planning will increase bureaucracy.
- Perception that the RPB will be involved in seeking to close areas for fishing and establishing marine protected areas.
- Desire for the RPB to assist with habitat restoration.
- Desire for the RPB to help maintain the existence of artificial reefs by improving the existing permitting process.
- Reminder for the RPB to consider how regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic will be relevant to the Southeast region once an RPB is established there.
- Suggestion to increase public understanding of the RPB's role and activities by using a metaphor (e.g., a switchboard connecting different agencies to each other).
- Support for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's bottom-up approach as opposed to the RPB's perceived top-down approach.
- Concern that insufficient fishing data influenced BOEM's process for siting offshore wind areas.