

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. At its core, regional ocean planning aims to achieve better coordination and collaboration between the numerous governmental agencies with existing management authority over our nation's ocean and coastal resources to strengthen ocean governance and decision-making to ensure healthy, productive, and resilient marine ecosystems for this and future generations. This document is the MidA RPB's Regional Ocean Planning Framework (Framework). The Framework informs the MidA RPB's regional ocean planning process by articulating a vision, principles, goals, objectives, example actions, and geographic focus. The Framework will guide development of a RPB workplan and RPB products moving forward.

The MidA RPB provided opportunities for public feedback and ideas about a draft Framework in order to help the MidA RPB account for the full diversity of ocean interests in the region. To facilitate a regional dialogue and to promote public and stakeholder engagement, the MidA RPB offered in-person public listening sessions in five Mid-Atlantic states and provided online public input opportunities from December 16, 2013 through April 15, 2014. Public listening sessions were held in Annapolis, Maryland on February 24; in Lewes, Delaware on February 27; in Norfolk, Virginia on March 20; in West Long Branch, New Jersey on March 27; and in Riverhead, New York on April 7. Details about these opportunities are posted on the MidA RPB website at <http://www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/>.

After April 15, 2014 the draft Framework was refined by the MidA RPB based on public feedback and the revised draft was offered for another round of public input during public comment sessions at a MidA RPB meeting convened on May 20-21, 2014. Edits resulting from that public input were made and the final Framework approved on May 21, 2014. Members of the public are welcomed to provide feedback about any aspect of regional ocean planning at any time and 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.
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About Mid-Atlantic regional ocean planning

Regional ocean planning is a collaborative process among Federal, State, Tribal, and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council representatives that improves our understanding of how the Mid-Atlantic ocean and its resources are being used, managed, and conserved. Additionally, the MidA RPB carries out coordinated efforts to address current challenges and emerging opportunities. Regional ocean planning helps 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 are critical to the success of this planning effort. The MidA RPB will develop meaningful and transparent stakeholder processes and engage stakeholders throughout the planning process.

The regional ocean planning process does not change existing authorities or create new mandates at the Federal, State, and Tribal levels. Rather, it aims to improve the effectiveness of Federal, State, and Tribal implementation of their responsibilities in the Mid-Atlantic ocean.

Key elements of regional ocean planning could include:

- Identify shared regional goals and objectives to guide decision-making by Federal, State, and Tribal entities, informed by scientific understanding, traditional knowledge, and stakeholder engagement and input.
- Promote and encourage 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.
- Develop a regional ocean action plan.

- Increase 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, meditative approaches in an effort to avoid costly, formal dispute resolution mechanisms and find solutions that meet the interests of MidA RPB members.
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Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal is an online toolkit and resource center that consolidates available data and enables regional ocean planners and ocean users to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, indigenous concerns, and energy sites, among others. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) initiated and oversees development of 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: <http://www.boem.gov/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. The MidA RPB uses an iterative and adaptive approach to regional ocean planning and will update planning initiatives to reflect new scientific and human use data and to address new challenges that may arise. As part of the regional ocean planning process, the MidA RPB plans to do the following:

- Develop a workplan that describes strategies and activities designed to achieve the MidA RPB goals and objectives, as articulated in this Framework.
 - Conduct a capacity assessment to identify existing activities that can support regional ocean planning.
 - Complete a regional ocean assessment to provide baseline information for ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic that takes into account current trends, forecasts, and risks associated with changing ocean uses and ecosystems.
 - The MidA RPB intends to develop a regional ocean action plan to achieve the goals and objectives articulated in this Framework.
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Description of Initial Geographic Focus

The MidA RPB's primary geographic focus area for regional ocean planning at this time is the ocean waters of the region. This means:

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

The MidA RPB recognizes the importance of bays, estuaries, and coastal areas and will draw connections and coordinate closely with entities responsible for the management and planning of the bay, estuarine, and coastal areas of the Mid-Atlantic for planning purposes, particularly in such cases where ocean uses and natural resources have an interrelationship with coastal communities, bays, estuaries, and ports or other shore side infrastructure. The MidA RPB will also coordinate and collaborate with Regional Planning Bodies and other entities in the Northeast and South Atlantic, including the leveraging of resources, which will be essential for success.

Vision

The 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, resilient, and sustainable natural and economic ocean resources that provide for the wellbeing and prosperity of present and future generations.

Principles

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

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.

Economic Value: The MidA RPB recognizes the economic value derived from the ocean and intends to enable opportunities for sustainable economic development.

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 ecosystems, species and habitats, and coastal communities and economies.

Compatibility of Multiple Interests: The MidA RPB will make information available to support economic development and ecosystem conservation so that multiple interests, including those of Tribal nations, can co-exist in a manner that provides for sustainable uses, reduces conflict, and enhances compatibility.

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.

Best Available Science: The MidA RPB will be guided by and incorporate the best available science and traditional knowledge in regional ocean planning.

Adaptability: The MidA RPB will embrace a flexible and adaptive approach in accommodating changing environmental and economic conditions, advances in science and technology, and new or revised laws and policies. The MidA RPB will track progress towards meeting established planning objectives and use the information gained to modify and adapt MidA RPB actions.

Transparency: MidA RPB products and information about processes will be made available to all interested parties in clear and accessible formats.

Engagement: The MidA RPB will seek meaningful stakeholder and public input in the regional planning process using multi-faceted tools to encourage public participation and understand expressed needs.

Consistency with Existing Laws: MidA RPB actions will be consistent with Federal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and treaties, and with State and Tribal laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and treaties where applicable.

Coordination and Government Efficiency: The MidA RPB will serve as a forum to increase inter-jurisdictional coordination to facilitate efficient and effective management of existing and potential future Mid-Atlantic ocean uses and resources. Such coordination will extend to partners and issues in adjacent areas that impact the Mid-Atlantic ocean planning focus area, including international waters as appropriate.

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Planning Goals and Objectives

Mid-Atlantic ocean planning goals are high-level statements of the desired outcomes the MidA RPB hopes to achieve. There are two overarching goals of the MidA RPB. Neither goal has been assigned higher priority than the other because the RPB views them as deeply interconnected. The objectives are also not listed in order of priority. Rather, the objectives under each goal 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. These objectives include the articulation of some example actions that could be taken by the MidA RPB to achieve the goals and objectives.

Goal: Healthy Ocean Ecosystem

Promote ocean ecosystem health, functionality, and integrity through conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration.

Note: The Healthy Ocean Ecosystem Goal 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.

Objectives:

- 1) *(Discovering, understanding, protecting, and restoring the ocean ecosystem)* Enhance understanding of ecosystem functionality and the key roles of Mid-Atlantic ocean habitats and physical, geological, chemical, and biological ocean resources through improved scientific understanding and assessments of naturally occurring processes

and changes and the effects of ocean uses. Foster collaboration and coordination for protection and restoration of ocean and coastal habitats that are important for improving ecosystem functioning and maintaining biodiversity.

Example action: Map and characterize submarine 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 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*) Pursue greater understanding and acknowledgment of traditional knowledge, along with other cultural resources and 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.

Goal: Sustainable Ocean Uses

Plan and provide for existing and emerging ocean uses in a sustainable manner that minimizes conflicts, improves effectiveness and regulatory predictability, and supports economic growth.

Note: The Sustainable Ocean Uses Goal focuses on fostering coordination, transparency, and use of quality information to support accommodation of existing, new, and future ocean uses in a manner that minimizes conflict and enhances compatibility. The MidA RPB has chosen to organize the objectives under this goal 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, with specific actions to be determined in a forthcoming RPB workplan. The MidA RPB intends to provide the means for decision-makers to implement their programs and authorities in an integrated way, such as through enhanced interagency coordination.

The MidA RPB recognizes that additional sectors, beyond those listed below, may need to be accounted for in the regional ocean planning process. The MidA RPB also recognizes that some terms used below require further clarification, a level of specificity the MidA RPB will strive to achieve through subsequent identification and implementation of actions to achieve these objectives.

Objectives:

- 1) (*National security*) Account for national security interests in the Mid-Atlantic through enhanced coordination, increased transparency, 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 institutional awareness of the impact maritime commerce exerts on the national and Mid-Atlantic economies and ensure new and updated maritime commerce and navigational information is available at the local and regional levels for integration into 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 and the importance of the maritime industry on the Mid-Atlantic and national economies.

- 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 in the context of coastal adaptation and resilience planning and implementation.

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

- 7) (*Non-consumptive recreation*) Account for the importance of near-shore and offshore non-consumptive recreational uses, and their local and regional economic contributions in the Mid-Atlantic; and in the management of other ocean uses and resources, consider impacts on non-consumptive recreational 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 respect the right of Tribal Nations to free, prior, and informed consent while taking 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 undersea 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.