

Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Work Plan

August 2015

Introduction

One of the primary outcomes of the January 2015 meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB or RPB) was to approve an approach to developing a Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan (OAP).¹ This approach enables the RPB to address opportunities for inter-jurisdictional coordination and to conduct analyses of ocean resources in the Mid-Atlantic to inform planning and management. In order to carry forward this approach, the RPB established three workgroups, Inter-jurisdictional Coordination, Data Synthesis, and the Regional Ocean Assessment, each with a specific charge in support of OAP development. The RPB also decided that stakeholder engagement will become an integral part of the assignment for each of these workgroups. This engagement will be conducted at key junctures in the OAP development process in concert with partner organizations working to support regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic.

This work plan describes the process and content that each RPB workgroup will follow and articulates each group's responsibilities. Workgroups are co-chaired by Federal and State representatives. The work plan is intended to serve as a flexible tool to guide RPB activities through OAP development. As the work evolves, the responsibilities of each workgroup may be refined and/or expanded to ensure that the RPB is positioned to develop a high-quality OAP by the end of 2016. This written work plan will also be updated periodically as the RPB proceeds with OAP development, to ensure that it accurately reflects current progress and thinking.

The [National Ocean Council](#) (NOC) is charged with implementing the [National Ocean Policy](#), including concurrence on regional ocean plans. To seek concurrence, the MidA RPB will send a final version of the OAP to the NOC by September 2016. Subsequently, implementation will proceed via individual jurisdictions of Federal, Tribal, and State authorities. This work plan indicates a target date for release of a draft ocean plan of June 2016. This allows for a public comment period, subsequent revisions, and delivery to the NOC in September 2016.

¹ This approach is available on the MidA RPB website here: <http://www.boem.gov/Proposed-Approach-Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Ocean-Action-Plan/>.

Mid-Atlantic RPB Timeline for OAP Development

Notes: Timing subject to change; best current assessment. Light blue indicates stakeholder engagement. Red lines indicate deadlines, some of which are mid-month. Coordination across workgroups will be continuous throughout. Quarters displayed represent calendar year. After NOC concurrence at the end of 2016, focus will shift to plan implementation.

	2015												2016											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
RPB BUSINESS MEETINGS																								
Public comment at RPB meetings																								
Approve OAP Approach																								
Proceed with workgroup activities																								
MidA RPB public webinars																								
Stakeholder engagement events																								
Prepare draft OAP																								
Make final edits and release draft OAP (mid-June)																								
Public comment on draft OAP (45 days)																								
Public listening sessions/roundtables																								
Integrate comments into final OAP																								
Deliver final MidA OAP to NOC (mid-Sept.)																								
NOC concurrence process																								
Final concurrence received on OAP																								

Interjurisdictional Coordination Workgroup

Terms of Reference

Introduction

A key objective of the ocean planning process in the Mid-Atlantic region is to help RPB member entities better work together to achieve the Healthy Ocean Ecosystem and Sustainable Ocean Uses goals and objectives identified in the [Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Framework](#). Interjurisdictional coordination (IJC) addresses specific processes and mechanisms that will allow member institutions of the RPB to coordinate, leverage resources, and make better decisions that benefit ocean users and ecosystem health through the implementation of their existing mandates and authorities.

The purpose of the IJC workgroup will be to identify interjurisdictional coordination opportunities and actions, both region-wide, and with consideration of specific geographic areas, as appropriate. The workgroup will initiate a set of discussions across RPB member entities to identify region-wide and geographically specific ocean management needs, opportunities, and recommended actions for consideration by the full RPB.

Bob LaBelle (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, BOEM) and Greg Capobianco (New York Department of State) serve as co-chairs of the IJC workgroup. Their role is to lead workgroup discussions, guide workgroup products, and report on process and decision points to the full RPB. The IJC workgroup will also coordinate closely with the Data Synthesis and Regional Ocean Assessment workgroups.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the IJC workgroup are to:

- Facilitate identification of member entity priorities, opportunities, and specific actions to improve member entities' ability to execute their missions under existing authorities through the use of data and/or interjurisdictional collaboration, both region-wide and in specific geographic areas.
- Recommend to the full RPB a series of draft IJC opportunities and actions.
- Consider ways to ensure linkages between IJC actions and data synthesis products, where appropriate.
- Engage potentially affected stakeholder communities in review of the draft opportunities and actions to seek their input on how potential changes in governmental business practices could affect them and how those actions could be carried out to meet their interests.
- Incorporate RPB and stakeholder feedback into a proposed set of final IJC opportunities and actions, poised for full RPB concurrence and inclusion in the OAP.
- Clearly communicate implications of final opportunities and actions to affected communities.

Data Synthesis Workgroup

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The purpose of the Data Synthesis workgroup is to: 1) help the RPB identify and meet new and emerging data synthesis/analysis needs; 2) oversee development of data products that help the RPB identify areas of ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural importance in the Mid-Atlantic; and, 3) work with the IJC workgroup to consider the potential use of data products. In pursuing these goals, the workgroup will consider both short-term (in this iteration of the OAP) and long-term (beyond 2016) data products and data synthesis/analysis needs. The workgroup will also develop recommendations to help the RPB identify when and how to engage stakeholders, particularly the scientific community, in these pursuits.

This workgroup will consider the range of approaches and methodologies appropriate to meet the data and information needs of the RPB and make recommendations to the RPB about those. The workgroup will also be responsible for advising the RPB on how to incorporate data synthesis products into the OAP. Laura McKay (Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program) and Mary Boatman (BOEM) serve as co-chairs of the Data Synthesis workgroup. Their role is to lead workgroup discussions, guide workgroup products, and report on process and decision points to the full RPB. The Data Synthesis workgroup will also coordinate closely with the IJC and Regional Ocean Assessment workgroups.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Data Synthesis workgroup are to:

- Consider a range of data synthesis approaches and data products that combine ecological data (e.g. identifying ecologically rich areas) and present recommended approaches to the full RPB.
- Consider a range of approaches for developing data products that synthesize spatial data on human uses to ensure that the Mid-Atlantic's socioeconomic values are well represented.
- Provide recommendations to the RPB about data synthesis and analysis approaches to pursue.
- Review draft synthesis maps provided by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) contractors (Marine-life Data and Analysis Team and RPS/ASA) and make recommendations as needed for edits or changes.
- Consider ways to ensure linkages between data synthesis products and IJC actions, where appropriate.
- Consider opportunities for review and input by scientific community and stakeholders.
- Provide recommendations as appropriate to MARCO's Ocean Mapping and Data Team and the Portal Team regarding the integration of data products to the Portal, in ways that optimize stakeholder access and effectively support IJC and other RPB processes.

- Coordinate with the Regional Ocean Assessment workgroup as appropriate to ensure that ecological and socioeconomic data and information developed for the ROA is integrated with synthesis products where possible.

Regional Ocean Assessment Workgroup

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The National Ocean Council issued *The Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, which calls for the development of a regional assessment to guide ocean planning efforts and support the RPB's development of an OAP. The Regional Ocean Assessment (ROA) workgroup is using the best available information on ocean uses and resources to develop an assessment that includes a description of the Mid-Atlantic Region's natural resources, ecological features, maritime activities, socioeconomic activity, marine infrastructure, and economic, cultural, and ecosystem value. It will include links to maps and further information that describes the environment and human activities relevant to the subject matter of the OAP.

The ROA workgroup has developed a White Paper that showcases, at a high-level, the various features, natural resources, and uses that make up the Mid-Atlantic Ocean and provides the setting as to why ocean planning is important in the region.

Kevin Chu (NOAA) and Sarah Cooksey (Delaware Coastal Programs) serve as co-chairs of this workgroup. Their role is to lead workgroup discussions, guide workgroup products, and report on process and decision points to the full RPB. The topics addressed by the ROA workgroup will be informed by the outcomes of the IJC and Data Synthesis workgroups.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the ROA workgroup are to:

- Work collectively with RPB entities to develop a White Paper that can inform the RPB on what is special about the Mid-Atlantic Ocean and guide the more comprehensive ROA.
- Assist MARCO to oversee the ROA contract (Waterview Consulting) to develop a more comprehensive ocean assessment that would use scientific studies, maps, web links, and information to characterize more comprehensively the ocean environment and human activities.
- Review draft ROA products provided by Waterview Consulting and make recommendations as needed for edits or changes.
- Coordinate with the Data Synthesis workgroup as appropriate to ensure that ecological and socioeconomic data and information developed by the Data Synthesis contractors is integrated into the ROA.
- Consider ways to ensure connections between data synthesis and IJC actions in ROA products, where appropriate.

Key Partners

Description of key partner effort in support of regional ocean planning

Guidance from the National Ocean Council emphasizes the importance of leveraging the work of regional partner organizations. The following partner organizations are pursuing efforts that complement the activities of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body.

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal is an online toolkit and resource center that consolidates available data, develops new data and enables State, Federal, and local 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 Portal serves as a platform to engage all stakeholders in Mid-Atlantic regional ocean planning—putting all of the essential data and state-of-the-art mapping and visualization technology into the hands of the agencies, industry, and community leaders and to support the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body ocean planning process. The Portal Team develops and improves the portal on behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) and is represented by Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute, Rutgers University’s Edward J. Bloustein School and Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis, The Nature Conservancy, and Point 97.

MARCO’s Ocean Mapping and Data Team

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) Ocean Mapping & Data Team (OMDT) regularly reviews available ocean data; identifies gaps in data needed for ocean planning; and maintains a current list of data needs and priorities on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (Portal). Additionally, the OMDT engages stakeholders to develop and/or “ground-truth” specific data layers and portal functions, supports other relevant stakeholder engagement activities and serves as a critical nexus for distributing information and data that are developed through the RPB process.

The OMDT is composed of Federal, State, Tribal, and Fishery Management Council representatives, along with representatives of academia, who act as advisors to the MARCO Management Board for updates and changes to the Portal. They also recommend to the MARCO Management Board data layers to be added to the Portal that meet specific spatial data quality criteria, as well as functions to be enhanced or added to the Portal.

MARCO’s Stakeholder Liaison Committee and other stakeholder engagement efforts

Stakeholder Liaison Committee

MARCO convenes a Stakeholder Liaison Committee (SLC) designed to strengthen its communication network and foster meaningful and ongoing stakeholder involvement in the Mid-Atlantic’s regional ocean planning process. The SLC serves as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among SLC participants while also creating opportunities for

participants to reach out to their industry, interest group, or sector to ensure that all interested constituents are informed and engaged in the regional ocean planning process. SLC members are individuals who are recognized as thought leaders and key nodes of communication by their communities of interest (e.g. their industry, interest group, or sector).

Insights and information gained through the SLC:

- Improve the Mid-Atlantic States' increased understanding of the issues and needs of the region's marine industries, commercial and recreational fishers, other recreational interests, the offshore wind industry, and conservation interests.
- Are shared with Federal, State, and Tribal members of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body to inform their work in ocean planning.

Additional Stakeholder Activities

MARCO also engages regional stakeholders through the following activities:

- *Sector-Specific Meetings.* These meetings are designed to identify current and future concerns, needs and/or challenges that specific ocean stakeholder sectors may have in regards to ocean planning, while highlighting opportunities and prospects for collaboration. The meetings also provide an in depth opportunity for the sector to provide input on the ocean planning process to date.
- *Multi-Sector Meetings.* As the Mid-Atlantic looks at the broad seascape of regional ocean planning, some key issues will benefit from an engaged dialogue among multiple relevant sectors.
- *Webinars and Event-Based Outreach.* Webinars create a platform of digital engagement with Mid-Atlantic stakeholders while attendance at conferences, trade shows, planning meetings and other events of regional importance allow for person-to-person engagement and communication.

Tribal engagement efforts funded by MARCO

MARCO, in consultation with the Shinnecock Indian Nation, and with the support of contractors, is in the process of conducting outreach to Federally-recognized Tribes, State-recognized Tribes, and State Tribal leadership boards and/or commissions through a series of tribal-focused listening sessions. The listening sessions will serve two purposes: 1) inform tribes in the region about current regional ocean planning activities and create opportunities for tribal engagement in the process, and 2) explore tribal-specific data needs and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) considerations in the ocean planning process (e.g., cultural, archaeological, historical, and natural resources) and identify a process to collect that information.

MARCO will also host participatory GIS (pGIS) sessions with Federal and State Tribes in the Mid-Atlantic to identify and collect existing tribal data for inclusion in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal. These data collection efforts would be informed by the Tribal Engagement listening sessions described above.