

Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan Open House Public Listening Sessions: July 2016

This document summarizes presentations and discussions at the five open house public listening sessions hosted by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (RPB) between July 12, 2016, and July 27, 2016. 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 (RPB).

About the Open House Public Listening Sessions

On July 5, 2016, the Mid-Atlantic RPB released the draft *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan* (Plan), a landmark document that outlines a collaborative approach to regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic. The goals of the Plan are to promote healthy ocean ecosystems and sustainable ocean uses in the offshore from New York to Virginia.

In order to effectively gather substantive public input on the draft Plan and on the regional ocean planning process more broadly, MARCO hosted five open house public listening sessions throughout the region. The open house public listening sessions were held at the following dates, times, and locations:

- Tuesday, July 12 in Virginia Beach, Virginia from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Thursday, July 14 in West Long Branch, New Jersey from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Tuesday, July 19 in Berlin, Maryland from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Wednesday, July 20 in Lewes, Delaware from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Wednesday, July 27 in Selden, New York from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Approximately 200 individuals in total attended the five open houses including members of the public, State and Federal agencies, representatives of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, MARCO staff, and members of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (Data Portal) team. Of these, approximately 175 were members of the public.

Meeting Objectives

The objectives of each open house were to:

- Provide Mid-Atlantic stakeholders with an overview of the draft Plan released for public review and comment.
- Discuss the role and functionality of the 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 open house followed a similar format. Federal and State representatives of the RPB presented a brief history of the RPB, outlined the goals, objectives, and actions in the draft Plan, and described the Data Portal. An example presentation from the Virginia session is provided in Appendix A.

At each of the open houses, the RPB members representing the host state (i.e., Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, and New York respectively) welcomed the meeting participants, described the importance of regional ocean planning to their states. State hosts at each session included:

- *Virginia*: John Bull, Commissioner, Virginia Marine Resources Commission and Laura McKay, Program Manager, Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program
- *New Jersey*: Elizabeth Semple, Manager, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Office of Coastal and Land Use Planning and Kevin Hassel, Environmental Specialist, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Office of Coastal and Land Use Planning
- *Maryland*: Gwynne Schultz, Deputy Director, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Coastal Service and Catherine McCall, Director, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Coastal and Marine Assessment Division
- *Delaware*: Sarah Cooksey, Administrator, Delaware Coastal Programs
- *New York*: Karen Chytalo, Assistant Bureau Chief, New York Department of Environmental Conservation and Michael Snyder, Policy Analyst, New York Department of State

State hosts and Federal representatives began by describing the establishment of the RPB in April 2013. The RPB is an intergovernmental body that coordinates and implements regional ocean planning among six Mid-Atlantic States, the Shinnecock Indian Nation, the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, 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 RPB member entities. The 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 RPB has held five in-person meetings to date 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 the content of the draft Plan, outlining the purpose of the Plan as well as the goals, objectives, and actions laid out in the document. The presenters also described the Data Portal, a centralized, public location for interactive ocean mapping and information focused on the Mid-Atlantic region, and its utility for regional ocean planning. Following the presentation, members of the Data Portal team answered questions from the public and demonstrated the uses of the Data Portal at a kiosk in the presentation hall. More details about the Data Portal are available at <http://portal.midatlanticocean.org/portal/>.

The RPB concluded the presentation by outlining a preliminary timeline for implementation of the Plan. Following the incorporation of public comments into the draft Plan, the RPB will submit the final Plan to the National Ocean Council (NOC) for review. The RPB is targeting late 2016 for Plan submission to the NOC and will then transition to Plan implementation. The RPB will update and refine the Plan on a periodic basis.

Following the presentations at each session, Kate Morrison, Executive Director of MARCO, facilitated a discussion among members of the public and members of the RPB regarding questions and feedback about the draft Plan. Major points from these discussions are captured below.

At the close of the question and answer session, participants were invited to engage in informal dialogue with RPB members and staff stationed around the room at posters focused on different topics related to the draft Plan.

Public Comments and Questions about the Draft Plan

A synthesis of the comments received at each open house is included below. 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.

Overarching Comments/Questions about Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

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 RPB.

Prominent Themes

- Appreciation for the RPB as a platform for relationship building among government entities.

- Requests for clarification on the RPB's timeline, including timing for key events and milestones, as well as concerns over the potential for political uncertainties to complicate the future of the RPB.
- Requests for clarification about the role of the RPB in decision making processes and how the Data Portal will be utilized in such processes.
- Desire for the RPB to clarify its plans to coordinate with adjacent RPBs.
- Questions about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's involvement in the RPB's work, especially in regards to post-storm resiliency and sand management.
- Questions concerning the geographic scope of the RPB, including the distinction between State and Federal waters.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Appreciation for the RPB's outreach to the fishing industry and its acknowledgement of the importance of traditional knowledge.
- Concern with the "top-down" process of regional ocean planning under the National Ocean Policy.
- Desire for clarification on the participation of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in the RPB process.
- Appreciation for the length of the 60-day public comment period.
- Suggestion that the RPB continue to hold meetings at least twice a year moving forward, rather than changing to annual meetings.
- Desire to pause all ocean development activities in the Mid-Atlantic until the RPB finishes its process.

Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan: General Content

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered that generally related to the content of the draft Plan. Questions and comments about the Healthy Ocean Ecosystem (HOE) and ocean energy-related actions are summarized in subsequent sections due to the high volume of public comments and questions regarding those draft Plan topics.

Prominent Themes

- Appreciation for the draft Plan and the RPB's work to date.
- Request for additional details on the content of draft Plan actions as well as information about how those actions will be implemented, especially for those to be led by Federal agencies.
- Appreciation that the RPB included an intention to develop a performance monitoring and evaluation plan.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Suggestion to rename the Plan to better convey the nature of the Plan as a research agenda and opportunity for coordination and collaboration among governmental entities.
- Suggestion to align language in the Plan with the language in the Executive Order that launched the planning process. More specifically, suggestion that the draft Plan should use the language in the Executive Order that explains that Federal members shall implement items in the Plan to the "fullest extent consistent with applicable law."
- Request to clarify the relationship between the Section 2.1 "Best Practices for Enhanced Coordination" and the sections on individual interjurisdictional coordination actions.
- With regards to Action 3 under Section 2.4.3 "Commercial and Recreational Fishing," suggestion for the RPB to use as a resource the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's policy document on non-fishing activities that pose a threat to fish habitat.
- Suggestion to clarify the measures taken in the draft Plan to mitigate the environmental and recreational impacts to beaches resulting from sand management.
- Suggestion that the Plan pay more attention to the presence of submerged munitions and unexploded ordnance.
- Question about whether or not the Plan has an international component to collect and share data on issues such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and highly migratory species.
- Question about the RPB's efforts to address atmospheric particles and ocean acidification.
- Inquiry about whether and how the Plan will be used to monitor the environmental effects of undersea infrastructure.

Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan: Healthy Ocean Ecosystem

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the Healthy Ocean Ecosystem goal outlined in the draft Plan.

Prominent Themes

- Request to rework Section 2.1 “Best Practices for Enhanced Coordination” to better reflect the RPB’s Healthy Ocean Ecosystem goal.
- Desire for clarification on the process, steps, and involvement of stakeholders and experts for identifying Ecologically Rich Areas (ERAs) and undertaking a pilot process.
- Desire for clarification on whether the Data Portal will host maps that display individual ERA components.
- Emphasis on the importance of mapping current ERA boundaries so that an ecological baseline can be established for future decision making, despite the potential for boundaries and areas to move over time.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Appreciation for the progress made in addressing the topic of ERAs under the draft Plan.
- Suggestion that the RPB take a proactive approach to ERAs and conservation planning rather than a reactive approach.
- Request for the RPB to revisit the language used to describe its two goals. The verb “promote” used in the HOE goal should be changed to convey the same connotation as the verbs “plan and provide for” in the Sustainable Ocean Uses goal.
- Concern that the HOE actions will put increasing strain on the fishing industry through seasonal closures and marine protected areas.
- Concern that the concept of ERAs implies that other places are less important. Suggestion for the RPB to consider reframing and renaming this concept to address that concern.
- Request for further information on the research to date that will help with the ERA identification process and whether the data will be updated into the future.
- Suggestion that the ERA pilot process lead to the protection of certain ocean areas.
- Request for the completion of MDAT products during the first iteration of draft Plan edits.
- Desire for ERAs to be identified by the end of 2016.

Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan: Ocean Energy

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the ocean energy-related actions in the draft Plan.

Prominent Themes

- Desire for clarification about the types of ocean energy covered under the Plan.
- Interest in the RPB's rationale for excluding activities such as offshore oil and natural gas exploration from the Plan's ocean energy actions.
- Concern about the impacts of wind energy development on marine commerce, navigation, avian migration routes, and human use activities that are dependent on migratory birds.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Request for clarification on why the actions under Section 2.4.2 "Ocean Energy" seem to reiterate many of the commitments made in Section 2.1 "Best Practices for Enhanced Coordination," whereas actions pertaining to other topical areas do not. Related to this, question about whether this means that agency leads on other actions are not committing to applying the concepts in the best practices section to their specific topical areas.
- Inquiry as to whether environmental impact studies have been conducted for wind energy development.
- Concern over the impact of climate change, offshore drilling, and oil spills on seabirds.
- Request that the northern portion of the New York Wind Energy Area, off Atlantic City, be removed to prevent the disruption of shipping activity and interference with shipping lanes.

Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan: Implementation

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the implementation of the Plan.

Prominent Themes

- Suggestion to clarify within the Plan how the RPB membership commits to using and implementing the Plan. Request to move the currently dispersed references to this concept into one location within the Plan.

- Desire for more information about how the RPB will monitor performance and evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan, including timing and responsible entities.
- Request for clarification on when the RPB will release a work plan related to implementing the actions outlined in the draft Plan and what specifically the work plan will contain.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Request for further details on how the best practices related to pre-application will be integrated into the day-to-day activities of RPB entities.

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

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

Prominent Themes

- Appreciation for the Data Portal.
- Request to integrate a feature that allows viewers to see upcoming and proposed ocean activities, both spatially and/or through a listing of notices.
- Desire for information about the RPB's plans for Data Portal maintenance, the process of integrating new data into the Data Portal, and funding the Data Portal into the future.
- Suggestion to include additional data sets in the Data Portal, such as citizen science data, recreational fishing AIS data, and data from the American Littoral Society's tagging program. Desire for a streamlined process for adding this data.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Question about whether data on essential fish habitat will be included in the Data Portal.
- Question about how the RPB is collecting data on the economic impact of recreational fishing and non-consumptive recreation.
- Emphasis on the need to use the data on the Data Portal to help reduce conflicts, e.g., when determining locations for sand dredging.
- Request for further information on the initial Data Portal investors.
- Request for further information on the efforts taken to collaborate with universities and academic institutions during the development of the Data Portal.
- Request to restrict Data Portal use in the private sector.

- Question about the role of the Data Portal in Federal and State agency decision making and whether the Data Portal will increase the government's environmental accountability.
- Request for more information about the use of the Data Portal to site past and current wind projects in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.
- Request for more information about how the Data Portal will be used to mitigate the impact of wind turbines on seabirds.

Stakeholder Engagement by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

Summarized below are the comments and questions members of the public offered related to the stakeholder engagement activities of the RPB.

Prominent Themes

- Desire for more information about the variety and extent of public engagement opportunities that have occurred during the regional ocean planning process, and what will occur in the future.
- Request for clarification on the frequency of public RPB in-person meetings and where the public can access information about past meetings and webinars.

Additional Comments/Questions

- Emphasis on the importance of including stakeholder input in the development of a work plan for implementing the actions in the draft Plan.
- Desire for more stakeholder engagement in RPB activities going forward and a clear indication of how the RPB will increase this engagement.
 - Support for adding stakeholders to future RPB working groups.
 - Suggestion to include an appendix to the Plan related to past and future stakeholder engagement opportunities.
- Request for further details on how RPB entities plan to coordinate with stakeholders under Section 2.1 "Best Practices for Enhanced Coordination."

Appendix A

[DRAFT]

July 12, 2016

Overview of the Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan

Open House Public Listening Session - Virginia

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL

**OCEAN
ACTION
PLAN**



[DRAFT]

**Laura McKay, Virginia Coastal Zone Management
Program**

**Kevin Chu, National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration (NOAA)**

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL

**OCEAN
ACTION
PLAN**



Overview of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

ESTABLISHED in April 2013
to design and implement
collaborative Mid-Atlantic
regional ocean planning

PRIMARY PURPOSE is to
improve coordination, share
data, and build collaborative
relationships to address
regional ocean issues.





- Includes representatives of:
 - 6 Mid-Atlantic states: NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, and VA
 - 2 federally-recognized Tribes in the region: the Shinnecock Indian Nation and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe
 - Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
 - 8 Federal agencies with ocean interests
 - Connecticut serves as an ex-officio member
- Website: www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body
- Email address: MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov



Public input: a priority throughout Draft Plan development

- 5 in-person public RPB meetings with public comment sessions
- 4 public webinars to present and hear input about draft RPB products
- 3 public workshops to discuss input about draft RPB products
- 10 public listening sessions in Mid-Atlantic States
- 2 Tribal listening sessions in VA and NY
- Numerous additional sector-specific and data-focused outreach efforts
- Summer of 2016:
 - Release of Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan for 60 days of public comment on July 6
 - Convening of 5 open house public listening sessions in the Mid-Atlantic States to share information about Draft Plan and receive public input

Timeline of Upcoming RPB Activities

Early July 2016:
Plan Release

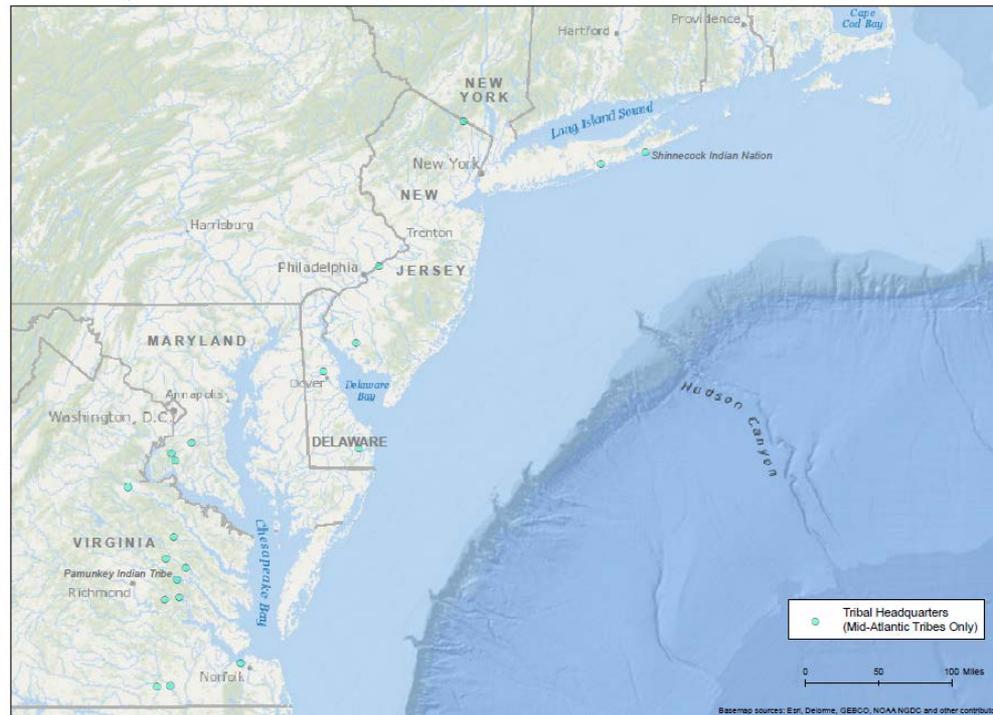
60 Day Public
Comment Period

Plan Revisions

Fall 2016: National
Ocean Council
Concurrence

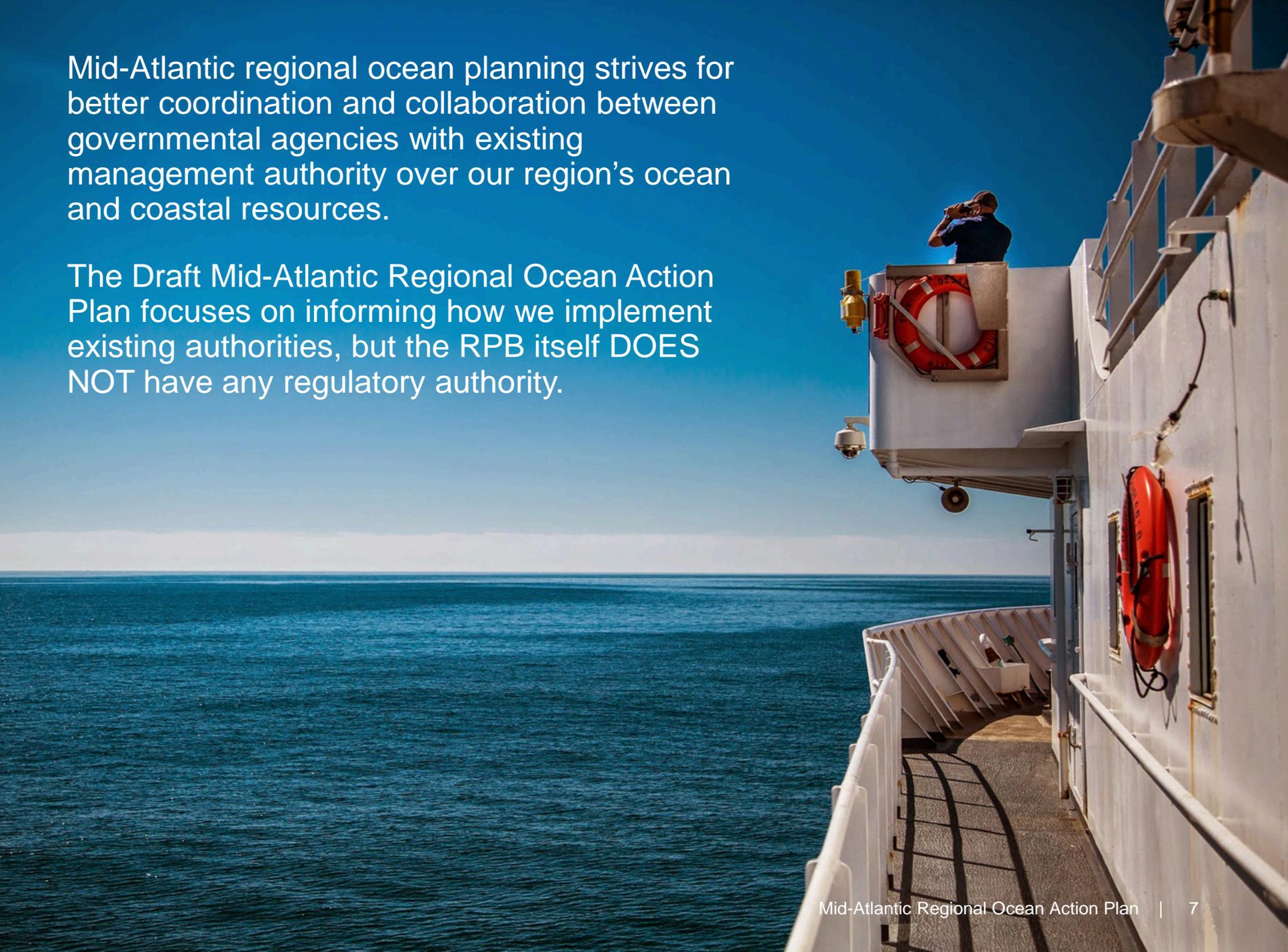
MARCO MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN
DATA PORTAL

MID-ATLANTIC REGION



Mid-Atlantic regional ocean planning strives for better coordination and collaboration between governmental agencies with existing management authority over our region's ocean and coastal resources.

The Draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan focuses on informing how we implement existing authorities, but the RPB itself DOES NOT have any regulatory authority.



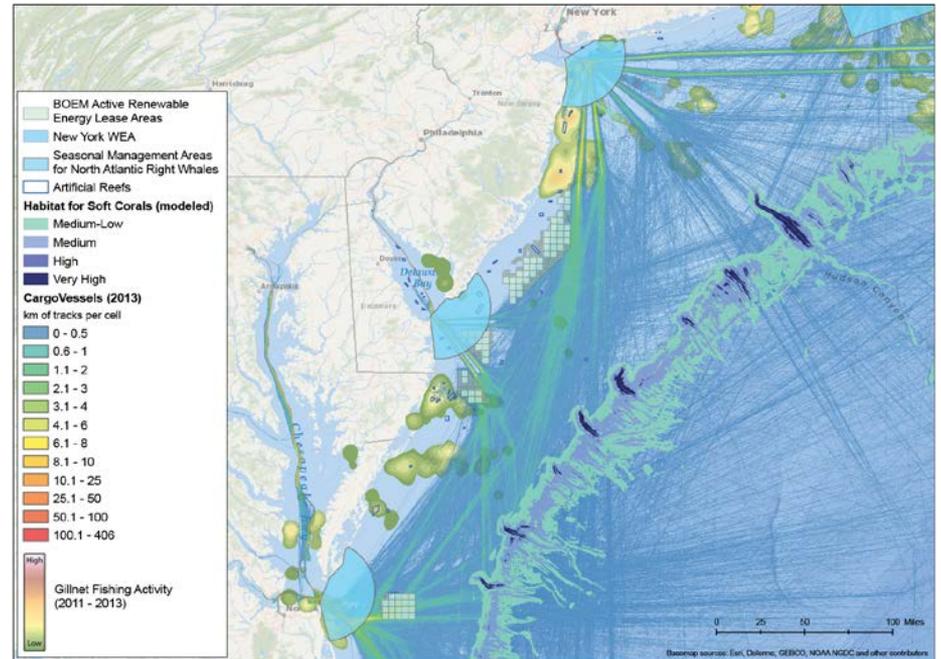
Best Practices

Best practices will enhance coordination and the sharing of data and information under existing authorities.

The best practices will enhance:

- The use of data and information in agency coordination
- Federal interagency coordination
- Coordination with stakeholders
- Federal-State coordination
- Federal-Tribal coordination

Best practices are a cornerstone of the Plan and directly support specific actions.





Interjurisdictional Coordination Actions

- Actions in Draft Plan enhance the capacity of Federal, State, Tribal, and MAFMC member entities to carry out their missions, work together more effectively, and serve the needs of stakeholders
- Actions do not change existing authorities or create new mandates at the Federal, State, and Tribal levels
- Actions in the Draft Plan:
 - Increase early coordination for better and more predictable decision making
 - Increase awareness of RPB entity needs, interests, and resources
 - Develop new products and practices
- There are direct and indirect linkages among the actions

Actions to Promote a Healthy Ocean Ecosystem

OBJECTIVE 1 – Discover, understand, protect, and restore the ocean ecosystem

OBJECTIVE 2 – Account for ocean ecosystem changes and increased risks

OBJECTIVE 3 – Value Traditional Knowledge



ACTION 1 Identify ecologically rich areas of the Mid-Atlantic and increase understanding of those areas to foster more informed decision making.

ACTION 2 Map shifts in ocean species and habitats.

ACTION 3 Develop a Mid-Atlantic Ocean Acidification Monitoring Network.

ACTION 4 Develop a regionally appropriate strategy for marine debris reduction.

ACTION 5 Develop indicators of the health of the Mid-Atlantic regional ocean ecosystem.

ACTION 6 Incorporate Traditional Knowledge of Tribes regarding ocean health in regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic.

Actions to Promote Sustainable Ocean Uses

33 actions address 9 objectives related to these ocean uses:

- National security
- Ocean energy
- Commercial and recreational fishing
- Ocean aquaculture
- Maritime commerce and navigation
- Sand management
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Tribal interests and uses
- Critical undersea infrastructure

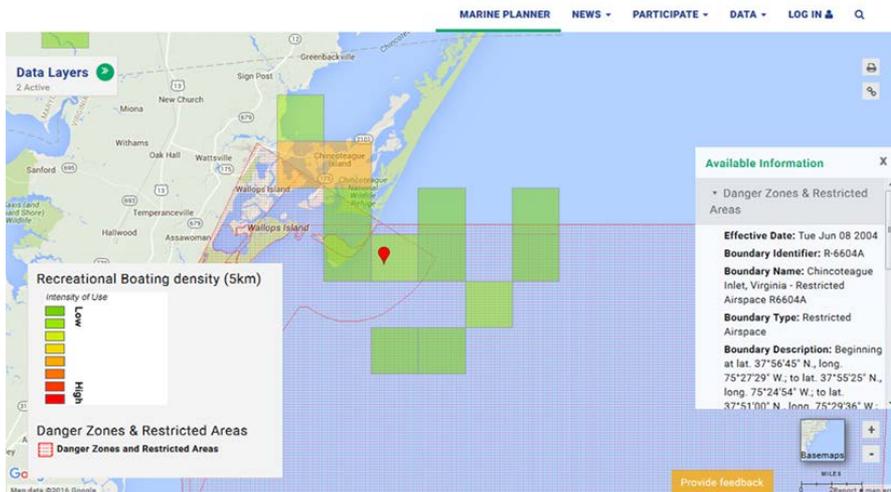


National Security

OBJECTIVE: Account for national security interests in the Mid-Atlantic through enhanced coordination, increased transparency, and sharing of information across RPB member entities.

ACTION 1 Use the Plan and Data Portal to guide and inform Department of Defense programs, initiatives, and planning documents.

ACTION 2 Identify Department of Defense points of contact for the range of national security data layers in the Data Portal.



Ocean Energy

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate greater collaboration around ocean energy issues in the Mid-Atlantic.

ACTION 1 Identify key intersections of relevant Federal programs and authorities that affect wind energy development.

ACTION 2 Develop internal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management guidance on integrating the Plan-developed best practices for using the Data Portal in management, environmental, and regulatory reviews.

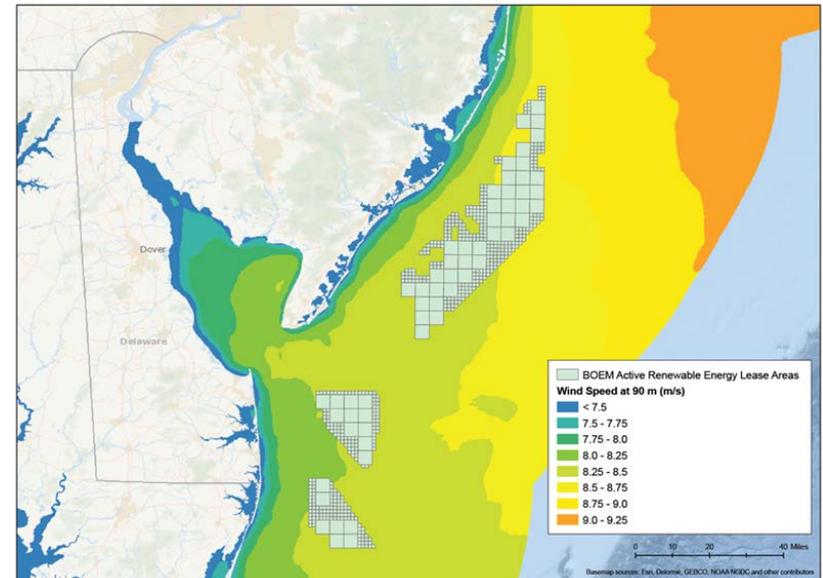
ACTION 3 Partner in on-going and planned studies, identify knowledge gaps, and increase access to research planning cycles related to ocean energy.

ACTION 4 Use the Data Portal to enhance access to data, environmental reports, and proposed offshore wind development activities.

ACTION 5 Improve consultations and communication with Tribes in the region.

ACTION 6 Enhance Bureau of Ocean Energy Management engagement of fishing industries through improved data and specific interactions.

RENEWABLE ENERGY DATA EXAMPLE



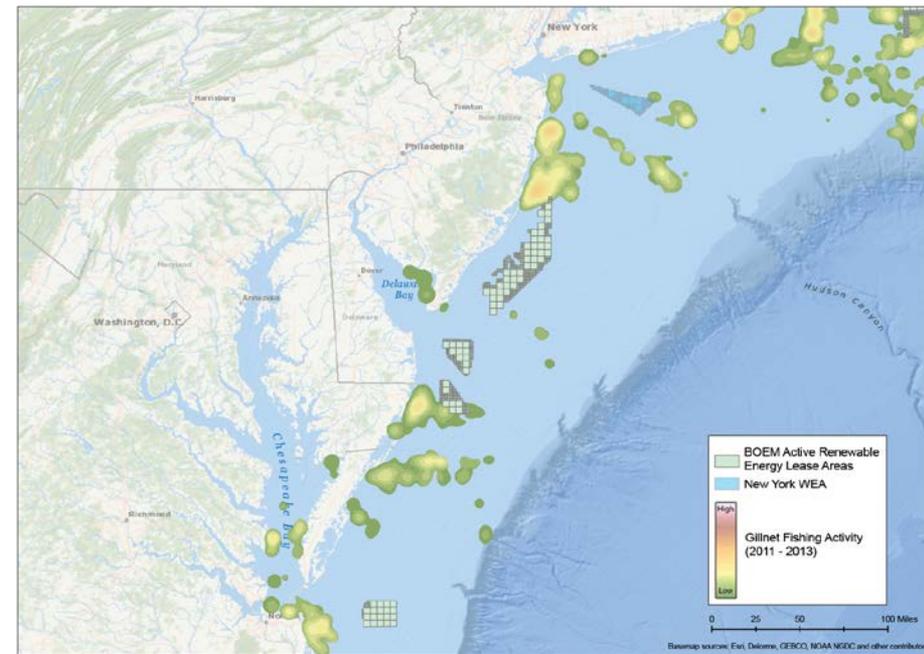
Commercial and Recreational Fishing

OBJECTIVE 3: 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.

ACTION 1 Improve the sharing of information and ideas between States, Tribes, Federal agencies, and Fishery Management Councils on fisheries science and management.

ACTION 2 Continue to actively engage stakeholders in fisheries science and management, and seek ways to make fishermen's knowledge available for planning.

ACTION 3 Improve collaboration for the conservation of essential fish habitat.





Ocean Aquaculture

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

ACTION 1 Use data and information in the Data Portal and other information sources advanced as a result of this Plan to support aquaculture siting and permitting.

ACTION 2 Improve collaboration on ocean aquaculture.

Maritime Commerce and Navigation

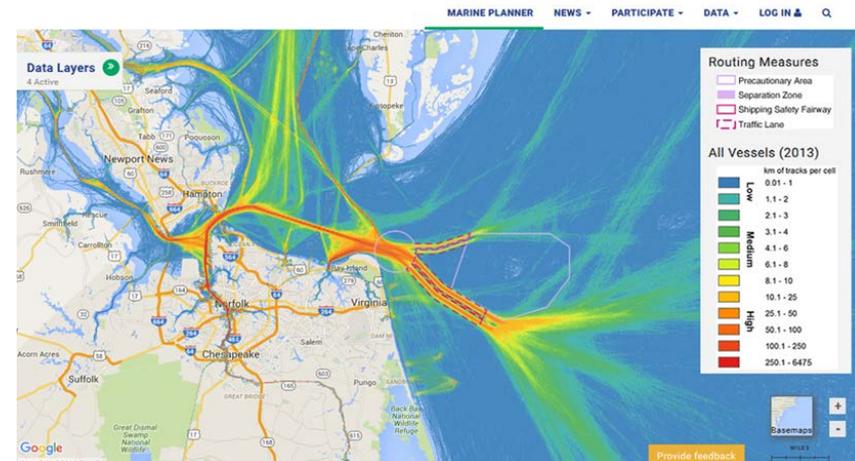
OBJECTIVE 5: Enhance institutional awareness of the impact that maritime commerce exerts on the national and Mid-Atlantic economies and ensure that new and updated maritime commerce and navigational information is available at the local and regional levels, for integration into regional ocean planning.

ACTION 1 Monitor marine commerce trends and traffic patterns to identify and address emerging commerce and navigation needs.

ACTION 2 Maintain reliable ocean use data sets relevant to navigation.

ACTION 3 Catalogue intersections between entities whose authorities influence marine commerce and navigation and identify opportunities for improved coordination.

ACTION 4 Identify impacts to navigation and port infrastructure stemming from the Panama Canal expansion.





Sand Management

OBJECTIVE 6: 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.

- ACTION 1 Promote strategic stakeholder engagement and regional partnering initiatives.
- ACTION 2 Develop a comprehensive inventory of sand resources to support planned and future restoration and resilience projects, provide availability for emergency use, and manage competing use challenges.
- ACTION 3 Conduct studies to support sustainable management of offshore sand resources.
- ACTION 4 Identify and improve existing Federal-State interactions and cooperative agreements in the Mid-Atlantic.
- ACTION 5 Engage fishing communities in planning and environmental review of proposed activities.
- ACTION 6 Engage Tribes in planning and environmental review of proposed activities.



Non-Consumptive Recreation

OBJECTIVE 7: Account for the importance of nearshore 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).

ACTION 1 Identify, characterize, and share information about measures to maintain the recreational value of important non-consumptive recreational areas and the activities they sustain.



Tribal Interests and Uses

OBJECTIVE 8: 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.

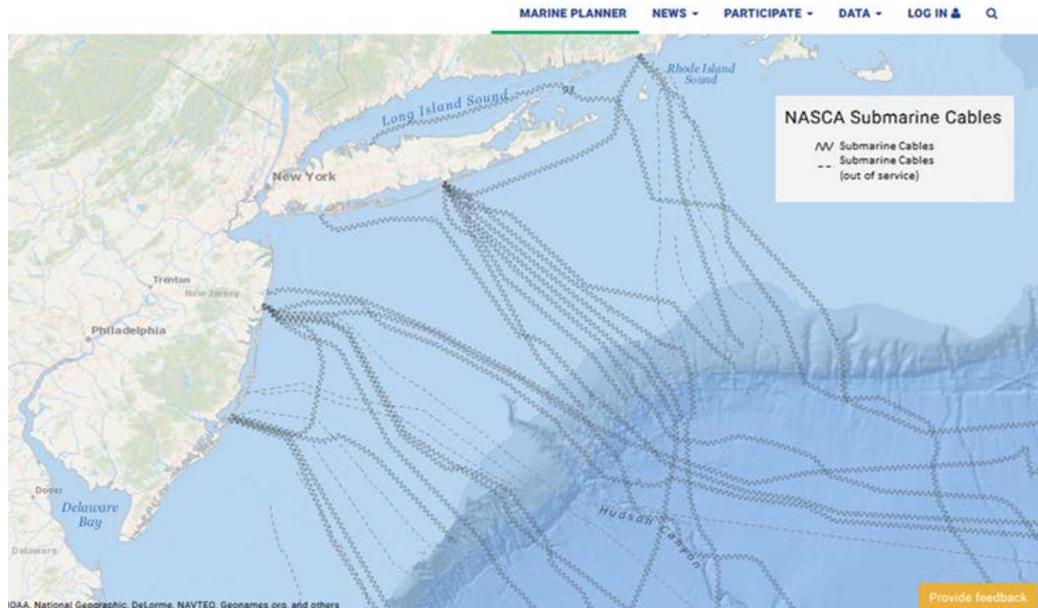
- ACTION 1** Identify, review and, if appropriate, recommend updates to Tribal consultation policies as they pertain to ocean planning.
- ACTION 2** Develop Tribal and agency ocean planning contact directories.
- ACTION 3** Work with Tribes to develop a Tribal Ocean Planning Network to facilitate coordination between Mid-Atlantic and Northeast Tribes in the ocean planning process.
- ACTION 4** Enhance understanding of Tribal rights.
- ACTION 5** Federal and State governments meet with Tribes to discuss issues related to Tribal participation in regional ocean planning and management, including policy and technical matters and grant opportunities.
- ACTION 6** Account for Tribal historic resources under the National Historic Preservation Act.
- ACTION 7** Identify and address data gaps pertaining to Tribal use of the ocean.

Critical Undersea Infrastructure

OBJECTIVE 9: 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.

ACTION 1 Engage the submerged pipelines and submarine cables industries to understand their current and projected needs for ocean space, and conduct an inventory of obsolete structures.

ACTION 2 Ensure early consultation with relevant undersea infrastructure interests in the regulatory review of marine development projects.

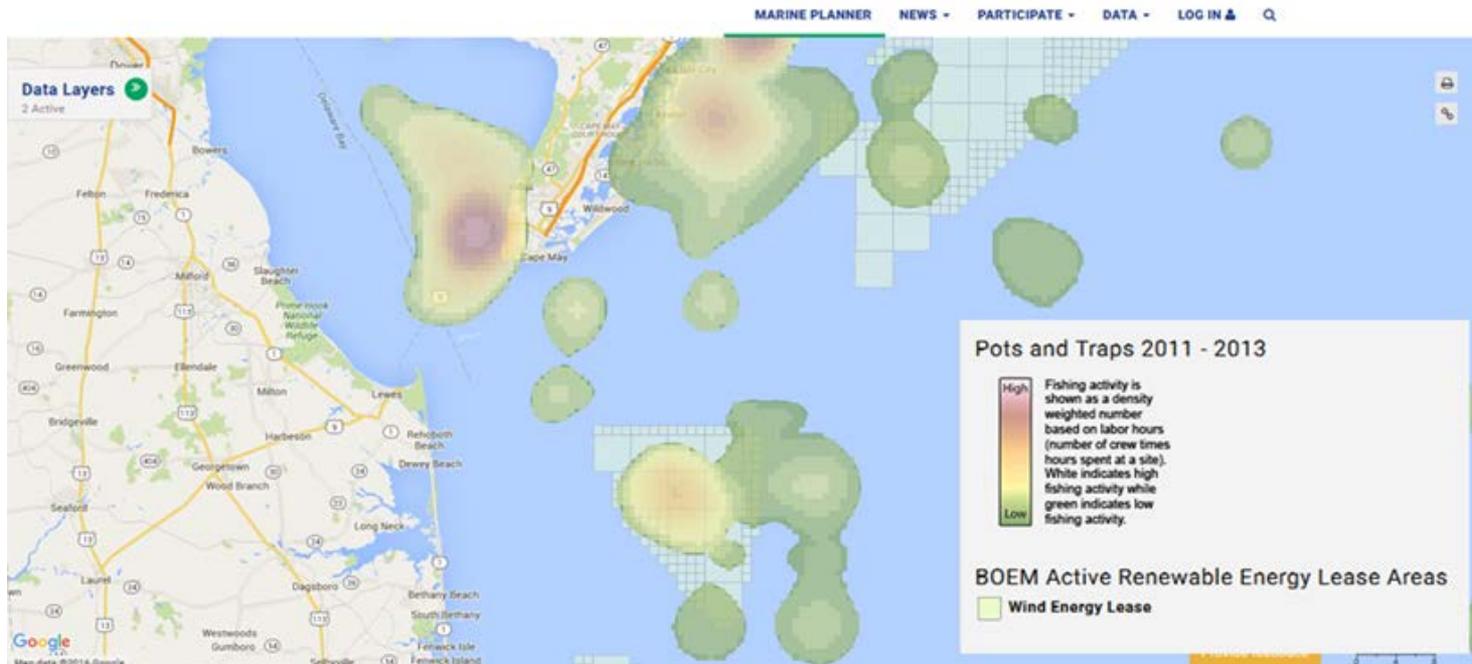


Coastal Zone Management Act

The RPB expresses interest in further exploring two options that would enable certain decisions related to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) to be made in a more efficient, streamlined, and coordinated manner.

The options relate to:

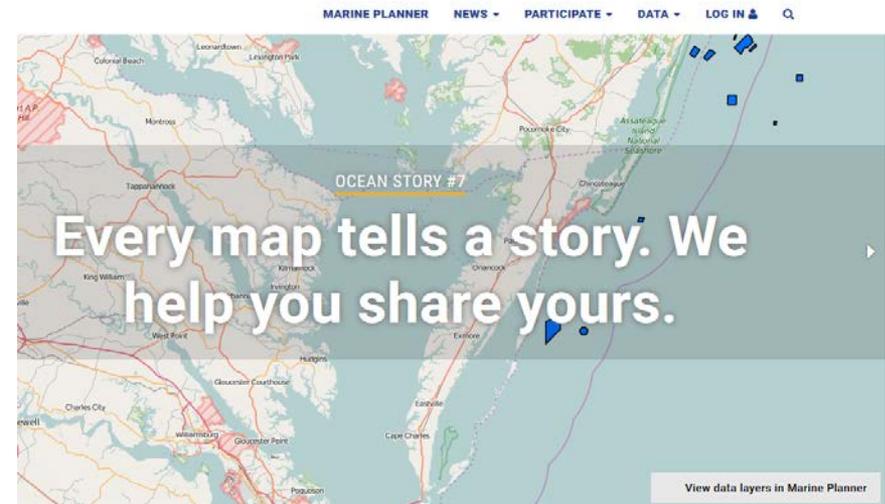
1. Providing earlier Federal notice to States and Tribes than current regulations require.
2. Improving States' abilities to execute the Federal Consistency provisions of the CZMA in the offshore space.



Data Portal, Science, and Research

The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (Data Portal) is:

- A key resource informing ocean planning
- A central, publicly accessible location for interactive ocean mapping and information
- A tool for Federal, State, Tribal, and local decision makers, as well as the general public to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information
- It can be accessed here:
<http://portal.midatlanticocean.org>



ACTIONS:

- Develop and implement a plan to sustain Data Portal operations and maintenance.
- Maintain operational components including web services, data development, and integration.
- Continue to engage in agency outreach and public engagement to enhance data and Data Portal functionality to effectively support decisions related to ocean management.
- Identify priority applied science and research needs for the Mid-Atlantic region.

Plan Implementation

The RPB will continue its work to ensure that:

- Progress is made in implementing the actions articulated in the Plan
- Stakeholders are continually engaged
- Ongoing coordination continues among RPB entities, with partners, and with adjacent planning processes
- Expertise and resources are being leveraged
- New information and changing circumstances are accounted for
- Detailed work plans for Plan implementation are developed and updated over time

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

The RPB commits to developing a performance monitoring and evaluation plan that will provide the RPB, stakeholders, and the public with tools to determine whether and how effectively the Plan actions implemented by the RPB are achieving the Framework goals and objectives.





Instructions for Public Comment

Public comments can be submitted to the RPB by **September 6, 2016** in the following ways:

- Email: MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov
- Mail: Robert P. LaBelle, Federal Co-Lead, Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body, BOEM, 45600 Woodland Road, Mailstop: VAM-BOEM DIR, Sterling, VA 20166
- Written comment card at an Open House public listening session

Q&A Listening Session

