

Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Webinar Summary

December 8, 2015 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Summary of Participant Input

On December 8, 2015, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB or RPB) convened its fourth public webinar, entitled *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Webinar: Update on MidA RPB Activities*. The webinar featured a series of brief presentations focused on providing updates on regional ocean planning activities in the Mid-Atlantic region, including reviewing the RPB's draft interjurisdictional coordination (IJC) actions, plans for implementation, and future stakeholder engagement. During this webinar, members of the public were offered the opportunity to comment and pose questions through an online question and answer (Q&A) function. This document summarizes the most common themes of comments and questions offered by participants, as well as responses offered by members of the MidA RPB. Additional information, including a full recording and transcript, a participant list, the slide presentation, and a listing of all questions posed over Q&A can be found at the MidA RPB website.¹

Webinar participants

Approximately 86 participants logged into the webinar.² The following sectors were represented:

- Recreational fishing
- Marine transportation
- Conventional energy
- Renewable energy
- Undersea cables
- Science/Academia
- Environmental advocacy organizations
- Policy advocacy organizations
- Federal agencies
- State governments
- Tribes
- General public

¹ <http://www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/index.aspx>

² An exact participant count is not possible. Webinar organizers are aware that some participants gathered in groups around shared computers.

Summary of comments and questions

During the webinar, participants asked questions and offered comments about the following topics.

Interjurisdictional Coordination Actions

- Several participants expressed concerns that the RPB is not planning to incorporate concrete management recommendations under most of the IJC topics. The RPB response was that the RPB needs to remain mindful of its appropriate role, that the development of new data products can inform decision-making, and that the increased coordination and relationship-building among RPB entities through this process can facilitate efficiencies going forward.
- A participant was interested in what criteria are used to determine IJC actions. The response was that the RPB did create a working set of criteria in January 2015, as expressed in a material entitled *Proposed Process, Criteria, and Examples of Potential IJC Actions*.³
- A question was asked about what guidance the Ocean Action Plan might provide regarding the protection of Ecologically Rich Areas (ERAs) or Region-wide Ecological Features that might be identified through the planning process. The response was that the appropriate data must first be gathered and put in context. Given time constraints, it is unlikely that every step in the process that the RPB may wish to take will be complete by the time the OAP is submitted to the National Ocean Council (NOC).
- A question was asked about whether the work being pursued to identify trends in ecosystem health will be included in this iteration of the OAP. It was clarified that this will probably not be done by the OAP drafting deadline and that it would be part of ongoing work.
- A participant asked whether the Coast Guard's Atlantic Coast Ports Access Study had taken into account ERAs. The response was that the most recent draft did not appear to, but that such suggestions should be provided directly to the Coast Guard when the report is officially released for public comment.
- Concern was expressed regarding the apparently sole emphasis on the fishing industry in the stakeholder engagement portion of the offshore wind IJC presentation. It was clarified that the emphasis on the fishing industry did not imply a reduction of stakeholder engagement on other fronts. It was further clarified that BOEM's broader stakeholder engagement work on offshore wind will consist of a series of efforts, for example, a White House Interagency Taskforce on Offshore Wind, opening BOEM's permitting process for public comment, and workshops.
- A participant was pleased that the fishery management and science draft IJC actions included a discussion of Essential Fish Habitat, but would like to see additional recommendations to strengthen that process.

³ <http://www.boem.gov/Proposed-Process-Criteria-Examples-Potential-Actions/>

- A participant asked members of the RPB to provide examples of non-consumptive recreation. The response was that non-consumptive recreation includes activities such as bird watching, surfing, and diving.
- Additional clarification was sought regarding a document released by NOAA⁴ on the Coastal Zone Management Act; specifically, what was meant by the statement that not all ocean uses result in a coastal effect. The response was that some ocean uses do not have a significant enough impact on the ocean environment to trigger a significant coastal effect that would warrant CZMA review.
- It was suggested that each IJC action topic area discussed in the OAP should include a discussion of that topic's impacts on the health of ocean ecosystems.
- A participant said that sand dredging needs to take into account impacts to offshore recreational use such as diving, and placement of sand on beaches needs to take into account tourism and recreation occurring in and around those beaches.

Data

- A question was asked about what datasets are included in the Portal. The response was that there is a large amount of data and it comes from a wide variety of sources.
- Additional clarification was sought on the role of the scientific community in reviewing MARCO-funded marine life data synthesis products. It was clarified that more than 80 scientists were involved in the development of those data products.
- A question was asked about how the science community would be engaged in vetting the research agenda created through one of the Healthy Ocean Ecosystems actions. The response was that the idea is to hold a workshop for interested scientists to provide feedback.

Stakeholder Engagement

- A participant sought clarity on whether evening sessions would be included in the public listening sessions to be held during the public comment period for the draft OAP in summer 2016. The response was that this timing suggestion will be considered once planning for these sessions gets underway.
- A participant asked if the RPB had considered expanding the public comment period on the draft Ocean Action Plan from 45 days to 90 days. The RPB responded that it has considered this, but decided that 45 days was the maximum amount of time possible given a very tight schedule.

General Comments and Questions about the MidA RPB

- Participants were interested in whether guidance published by federal agencies on how they intend to use the Ocean Action Plan will be released to the public for comment. The MidA RPB is working to leverage NE RPB efforts in this arena. A template is being

⁴ <http://neoceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CZMA-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

developed with the content for each federal agency's public notice regarding how the plan would serve as guidance for agencies.

- A participant asked if the RPB will incorporate undersea fiber optic cables and other undersea infrastructure into the OAP. While the RPB considers this topic important, no actions are being developed at this time. The RPB will include general language about the critical undersea infrastructure and the aquaculture topics in the plan to be potentially expanded upon in future iterations.