

Coastlines throughout the United States change over time, and so, too, must the two key boundaries that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) uses and maintains through the Boundary Delineation System (BDS) to identify its mission areas. These boundaries, the Submerged Lands Act (SLA) boundary and Limit of “8(g) Zone” boundary, are the official Offshore Marine Cadastre boundaries from which other area delineations are made.

## Projected Boundaries and the SLA Coastline

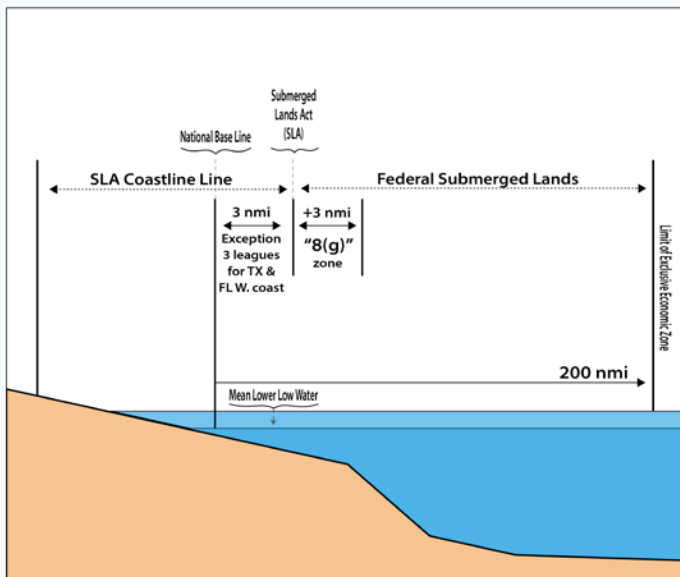


Figure 1. Boundaries Delimiting U.S. Maritime Zones

By using the BDS, specialists in the Geospatial Services Division “project” these boundaries from a common starting point, called the National Baseline (NB, also called the U.S. Normal Baseline) established by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The NB denotes the low-water line along the coast as recognized by the individual coastal state. As you might expect, the low-water line changes in response to shoreline erosion, accretion, or avulsion.

Boundaries measured from the NBs are also ambulatory. Figure 1 shows clearly the state submerged lands and the 8(g) zone.

## Which coastline is the baseline?

The Submerged Lands Act of 1953 (SLA) recognizes that coastal states have title to the navigable lands within their boundaries, including maritime waters within approximately 3 geographical miles from the coastline, although that measure varies in some states. There are three instances when the SLA boundary coastline differs from the NB, the most common being when the U.S. Supreme Court issues a decision or fixes a boundary by decree. The Supreme Court has fixed the boundaries along the coasts of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi and California, as well as the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas of Alaska.

A boundary can also become fixed when SLA-specific data provides a more accurate depiction of the line and in some cases where the shoreline is associated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permit process. The NB has been integrated into the SLA boundary for Atlantic coast states and Washington and Oregon, and the SLA is ambulatory in these areas.

In cases where the SLA boundary has changed, the Federal Government works individual states to identify and fix the new SLA coastline. BOEM’s GDS staff uses the BDS to calculate the new boundary. That’s the case in 16 BOEM planning areas. Table 1 shows the status of the ambulatory baselines per BOEM planning areas. The GSD and NOAA are reviewing these areas in an effort to update them. “MMS” in the Baseline Type column refers to a predecessor boundary to the SLA boundary.

## Table 1. Status of Ambulatory Baselines

Region	Planning Area	Baseline Effective Date	Baseline Type
Alaska	Aleutian Basin	No Baseline	N/A
Alaska	Hope Basin	1991, 2004	MMS
Alaska	Norton Basin	1991, 2004	MMS
Alaska	Navarin Basin	No Baseline	N/A
Alaska	St. George Basin	1991, 2004	MMS
Alaska	Bowers Basin	No Baseline	N/A
Alaska	Kodiak	2003	MMS
Alaska	Gulf of Alaska	1993, 1997, 1998, 2004	MMS
Atlantic	North Atlantic	2004	NB
Atlantic	Mid-Atlantic	2004	NB
Atlantic	South Atlantic	2004	NB
Atlantic	Straits of Florida	2004	NB
Atlantic	U.S Virgin Islands	1999	Unpublished
Atlantic	Puerto Rico	1999	Unpublished
Pacific	Washington and Oregon	1997, 2006	MMS and NB (unpublished)
Gulf of Mexico	Eastern	1995, 1997, 1998	MMS

### Limit of "8(g) Zone" Boundary

The name of the second boundary refers to the section of the Outer Continental Lands Act (OCSLA) that establishes an area where the Federal Government and the adjacent state share revenue from economic activity. It is the zone between SLA boundary and a line projected 3 nautical miles seaward of the SLA boundary line, or put another way, it's the area that lies generally between approximately 3 and 6 nautical miles offshore. Within this area, revenues from mineral development are shared with the coastal states. For Texas and Florida (Gulf of Mexico Coast), the zone is between 9 nautical miles and 12 nautical miles.

### For more information about BDS, please see the following Fact Sheets:

- <https://www.boem.gov/Boundary-Delineation-System>
- <https://www.boem.gov/Official-Mapping-Products>
- <https://www.boem.gov/Other-Boundaries>



**For More Information:**

<https://www.boem.gov>

BOEM.gov |  