

While the coastline and the boundaries projected from it are essential to BOEM's work, there are other mission-critical boundaries that the Geospatial Services Division must maintain in the Boundary Delineation System (BDS) that are independent of the Submerged Lands Act (SLA) Coastline. These other boundaries of note are not "projected" from the coastline; however, they still require maintenance as part of the official Offshore Marine Cadastre.

Non-Projected Marine Boundaries

Geospatial Services Division defines and prepares all non-projected offshore boundary data from original source documents, including acts of Congress, international treaty agreements, and Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lease sales. The non-projected boundary types prepared by the GSD are explained below:

Planning Area

A planning area is a large, contiguous portion of the OCS that consists of defined OCS blocks, and is considered as an entity for administrative planning purposes. This authoritative boundary is required for developing the National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program and is typically derived from GSD's equidistant and ellipsoidal calculations. BOEM currently has 26 planning areas within the OCS.

Military Mission Line

This boundary is a Department of Defense line found to the west of Florida that delineates an area for military testing and training, typically occurring east of the line. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) established this line, closing the area to new oil and gas leasing through June 30, 2022. The closure was extended 10 years by Presidential Memorandum dated Sept. 8, 2020.

State Offshore Lateral Boundary

This boundary delimits the approximate location between two states seaward of the coastline and terminates at the SLA boundary. The coastal land boundary description is not available because most state boundary locations have not been officially described beyond the coast or are disputed between states. The lateral boundaries serve as an approximation used to determine a starting point for creating BOEM's OCS Administrative Boundaries.

NOAA Marine Protected Areas

In the U.S., these protected areas come in a variety of forms and are established and managed by all levels of government. They are uniquely classified as marine sanctuaries, estuarine research reserves, ocean parks, and marine wildlife refuges. MPAs may be established to protect ecosystems, preserve cultural resources such as shipwrecks and archaeological sites, or sustain fisheries production to restrict human activity for a conservation purpose, typically to protect natural or cultural resources (see <https://marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov/aboutmpas/>).

NOAA Maritime Boundaries

The maritime boundary (MB) line separates one country from another as defined by treaty or agreement. For the U.S., the MB is entered into force with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate (e.g., U.S. - Mexico Maritime Boundary, U.S. - Mexico Continental Shelf Boundary) (see Figure 1). Generally, a maritime boundary is delineated at a distance from a jurisdiction's coastline. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea establishes that the territorial waters of a country can extend up to 12 nautical miles (nm) (22.227 kilometers) from the low-tide mark of the sea.

NOAA Maritime Limits

The Economic Exclusion Zone limit (EEZ) is a sea zone limit prescribed by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, over which a sovereign state has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources, including energy production from water and wind. The U.S. EEZ limit extends no more than 200 nm from the territorial sea boundary (often defined as the mean low water line along the U.S. coast) and is adjacent to the 12 nm territorial sea of the U.S., including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any other territory over which the United States exercises sovereignty (see Figure 1).

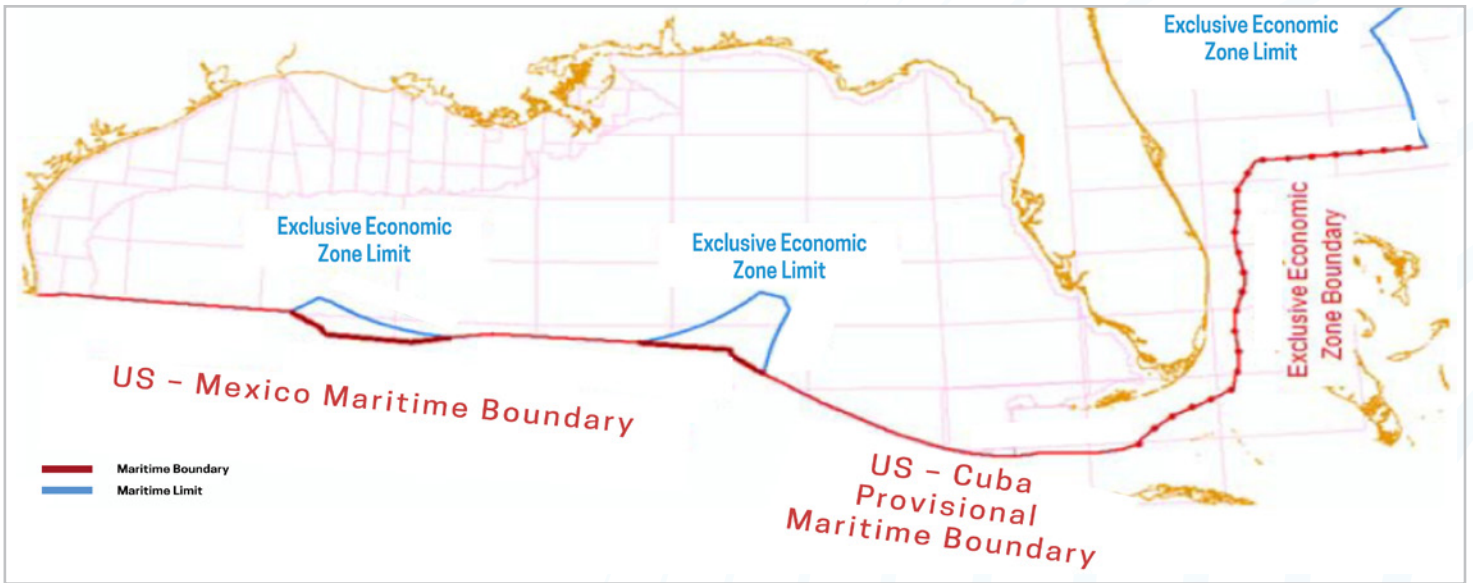


Figure 1. Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Index Maps

Continental Shelf Boundary

The Continental Shelf Boundary (CSB) delineates the seaward limit of the Department of the Interior's administrative and enforcement responsibility under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act and the SLA. Consistent with international law, the limit of the OCS may be co-terminus with the 200 nm EEZ.

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/Projected-Boundaries>



For More Information:

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