

*Note to the reader: The Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning body (MidA RPB) welcomes input on this draft document. Comments may be provided during the public webinar on October 29, 2014, verbally or in writing at one or more of the MARCO-hosted public listening sessions from November 5-18, 2014, or via email at [MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov](mailto:MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov) by 5:00pm ET November 20, 2014. More information about the webinar and public listening sessions is available at [www.boem.gov/MidA-RPB-Meetings](http://www.boem.gov/MidA-RPB-Meetings).*

# Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

## Interim Plan for Stakeholder Engagement

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### Purpose

This interim plan is intended as a guidance document for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB). The MidA RPB members welcome input from members of the public on the questions posed and issues raised in this document. Input will be used to inform development, in early 2015, of the initial draft of a longer-term stakeholder engagement plan.

The purposes of this document are to: 1) present the MidA RPB's approach to stakeholder engagement; 2) outline opportunities for interaction, in general and specifically in the lead-up to the next MidA RPB meeting in January 2015; and 3) introduce a range of tools and methods for consideration as part of a longer-term stakeholder engagement plan. Following the January 2015 MidA RPB meeting, the MidA RPB will have settled on an approach to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan (OAP) and will be moving ahead with developing a comprehensive workplan for development of that OAP and related regional ocean planning activities. That workplan will include a stakeholder engagement plan tailored to ensure meaningful public input throughout the development of a successful OAP.

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### Context

The mission of the MidA RPB is to implement ocean planning in the region by coordinating with stakeholders; scientific, business, and technical experts; and members of the public to identify and address issues of importance to the region. Regional ocean planning helps guide resource conservation and economic development by facilitating information sharing, fostering collaboration, and improving decision-making about a growing number of ocean uses vying for ocean resources and space. Partnerships with stakeholders are critical to the success of this planning effort so cultivating and continuing these partnerships is a priority for the MidA RPB.

To date, MidA RPB stakeholder engagement activities have largely focused on sharing periodic email updates with stakeholders, exploring opportunities to work effectively with other

organizations engaged in ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic,<sup>1</sup> and ensuring that stakeholders are invited to provide input on ocean planning broadly and on specific draft documents in writing, through webinars, at public listening sessions, and at in-person MidA RPB meetings. Specifically, formal mechanisms to disseminate and receive information between the MidA RPB and stakeholders have included:

- Draft documents, meeting announcements, and other materials posted to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)-hosted MidA RPB website;
- Comments submitted to the MidA RPB via email at [MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov](mailto:MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov);
- Announcements via email to contacts included in the MidA RPB email database; and
- In-person meetings and webinars that include opportunities for public comment.

In addition to these formal approaches, many MidA RPB members regularly interact with and learn from stakeholders as part of their non-RPB duties.

As regional ocean planning progresses, and particularly in early 2015 once an approach is selected for the OAP, the MidA RPB recognizes the need to ensure that stakeholders have opportunities to engage in ways that work well for them and that result in their interests being well understood and incorporated in the work of the MidA RPB. To help facilitate this approach, the MidA RPB has formed a Stakeholder Engagement workgroup focused on preliminary strategizing, identifying key stakeholders, and outreach.

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## MidA RPB Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

### Stakeholder Engagement Goal

The MidA RPB's goals for stakeholder engagement are to help the MidA RPB understand and incorporate the needs, concerns, and expertise of stakeholders and engage them in meaningful ways that lead to results developed in consideration of those stakeholders' interests.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in 2009 the States of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia created the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO). Through MARCO the States are taking collaborative action and engaging stakeholders to advance ocean issues that are shared priorities of the States. MARCO is conducting its own ocean planning activities and has made its products and services available to the MidA RPB to inform and guide the RPB's work.

<sup>2</sup> The Stakeholder Engagement Goal was modified from the May 2014 version to clarify the MidA RPB's intentions for stakeholders to be involved and have an active role in the MidA RPB process and results, rather than the only having the opportunity to comment on draft products.

## Stakeholder Engagement Approach

The MidA RPB will work closely with stakeholders, directly and in partnership with other organizations, in ways that are meaningful and efficient and that include a combination of one-way communication such as email updates and more consultative approaches such as in-depth sector and/or topic-specific meetings and workshops.

## Stakeholder Engagement Objectives

The MidA RPB seeks to:

1. Identify, assess, and engage key stakeholders in regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic by, among other things:
  - Informing and seeking input on how to appropriately and productively differentiate among and engage stakeholders on different topics throughout the MidA RPB process; and
  - Helping MidA RPB members and stakeholders understand and suggest opportunities and tools for engagement, and avail themselves of those opportunities in the ways that suit them best.
2. Strengthen communication and mutual, shared understanding about relevant challenges and opportunities for the Mid-Atlantic ocean, including:
  - Informing and equipping MidA RPB members with the tools and messages they need to effectively communicate with stakeholders, directly and through the entities that they represent (e.g., on the RPB, BOEM, represents all agencies within the Department of the Interior);
  - Informing stakeholders about ocean planning activities, timelines, and the MidA RPB's role;
  - Engaging in active and ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, requesting and obtaining stakeholder input and advice, and providing feedback to stakeholders on the formal comments they submit; and
  - To the extent possible and practical, reflecting stakeholders' suggestions and comments in MidA RPB decisions, documents, and actions.
3. Build and expand MidA RPB members' and stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and understanding to maximize the effectiveness and value of regional ocean planning in the mid-Atlantic.
4. Capitalize on previous and ongoing related efforts such as state ocean planning activities; planning related to coasts, bays, and estuaries; and other regional ocean planning efforts.

## Planning to Engage Effectively

For immediate use, and in preparation for development of a longer-term stakeholder engagement plan early in 2015, the MidA RPB is gathering information from stakeholders about how they wish to engage in the process. Specifically, the MidA RPB seeks to understand:

- Issues of particular importance to stakeholder groups and their constituents;
- How stakeholder groups and their constituents would like to engage with the process;
- The types of engagement opportunities and communication different stakeholders would find most useful; and
- Particularly given resource constraints and other ongoing activities, suggestions for ways the RPB could work with others to ensure that stakeholders' ideas are recognized, understood, and considered.

The MidA RPB recognizes that there are other organized stakeholder engagement efforts underway in support of regional ocean planning and related topics in the Mid-Atlantic as well as a range of interested, well-informed, and well-organized groups focusing on these issues.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the MidA RPB welcomes input on the engagement methods and tools outlined in [Appendix A](#), as well as suggestions for other methods that could be used most effectively by the MidA RPB on its own and/or in coordination with others, for the purposes of advancing ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic.

Considering the existing range of expertise and interests among other organizations and the financial and human resource constraints within the MidA RPB, the MidA RPB actively seeks suggestions regarding with whom and in what ways the MidA RPB might coordinate to ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the process in the ways that work best for them.

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## Opportunities to Participate

There are a number of opportunities to work with the MidA RPB for those who are interested in contributing to its efforts. Specific current and upcoming opportunities include: submitting comments on a set of public review drafts (this document included); participating in a public webinar to review those documents on October 29, 2014; participating in a series of MARCO-hosted public listening sessions in November 2014; and participating in the next in-person MidA RPB meeting on January 21 and 22, 2015. More information about these opportunities for participation is available on the [MidA RPB website](#).

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<sup>3</sup> Stakeholder engagement opportunities include, for example, MARCO's Stakeholder Liaison Committee, MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, individual sector-based efforts such as bi-monthly Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meetings, and periodic sector-specific conferences and other gatherings.

Ongoing opportunities for stakeholder engagement with the MidA RPB include:

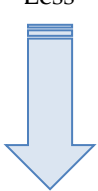
- *Attending a meeting.* The MidA RPB conducts discussion and decision-making sessions during in-person meetings, at which members of the public are invited to provide comments. A transcript and detailed summary are made available following each meeting to capture the discussion and decisions made.
- *Communicating questions or concerns.* The MidA RPB welcomes comments, suggestions, and questions at any time, not only when draft documents have been posted for review. Questions or comments can be emailed to [MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov](mailto:MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov) or any of the MidA RPB members (roster available on the [MidA RPB website](#)).
- *Registering for Email Updates.* Members of the MidA RPB's email distribution list receive regular email updates about MidA RPB meetings, other related activities, and opportunities to comment on documents. To be added to the distribution list, please email [MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov](mailto:MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov).
- *Staying informed.* As part of its stakeholder engagement efforts, the MidA RPB will take steps to ensure website content is accurate and up-to-date. The MidA RPB will post information about upcoming meetings, webinars, or opportunities for public comment on the MidA RPB website in addition to disseminating key information via the email distribution list.

## Appendix A: Potential Stakeholder Engagement Tools and Outreach Methods


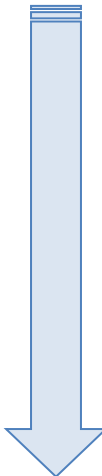
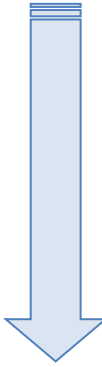
The tools and outreach methods included in this appendix are offered as a basis for discussions among RPB members and in conversations with stakeholders. The tables below outline seven categories of stakeholder engagement tools. They include three columns: 1) a relative indication of the degree of time and resources that might be required to pursue each activity; 2) a description of the tool or method itself; and 3) an indication of the directionality of information sharing that might be fostered.



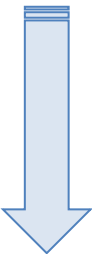
The tables in this appendix are *not* intended to indicate specific plans for how the MidA RPB will engage in stakeholder engagement. They are intended for use in discussions among RPB members and with stakeholders about:

- Issues of particular importance to stakeholder groups and their constituents;
- How stakeholder groups and their constituents would like to engage with the process;
- The types of engagement opportunities and communication different stakeholders would find most useful; and
- Particularly given resource constraints and other ongoing activities, suggestions for ways the RPB could work with others to ensure that stakeholders’ ideas are recognized, understood, and considered.

Time and Resource Intensity	Tool	Directionality <sup>4</sup>		
		From RPB	Dialogue	To RPB
<b>1. Meetings</b>				
Less  More	Invite public comments during regularly scheduled RPB meetings	↓		↑
	Hold additional meetings to invite public comment in structured testimony (focused by geography, topic, or work product)	↓		↑
	Convene workshop-style, sector- and topic-specific meetings	↓	○	↑

<sup>4</sup> ↓ = primarily from the MidA RPB to stakeholders;  
 ○ = dialogue between the MidA RPB and stakeholders;  
 ↑ = primarily from stakeholders to the MidA RPB.

Time and Resource Intensity	Tool	Directionality <sup>4</sup>		
		From RPB	Dialogue	To RPB
<b>2. Telephone Calls</b>				
Less  More	RPB members entities conduct ad-hoc check-in calls to stakeholders	↓	○	↑
	RPB members, their staff, or designees, conduct planned and targeted phone calls to key stakeholders about MidA RPB activities	↓	○	↑
<b>3. Gather General and Document-Specific Input</b>				
Less  More	Include open requests for public comment in all email updates	↓		↑
	Actively consider input from all stakeholders, including the MARCO Stakeholder Liaison Committee; encourage RPB members to participate (independently) in meetings where stakeholders will be discussing ocean planning	↓		↑
	Solicit comments on documents via electronic submission	↓		↑
	Invite additional input on near-final drafts at in-person meetings	↓		↑
	Invite public comment during regularly scheduled RPB meetings		○	↑
	Host more than one formal comment period on draft documents	↓		↑
	Invite stakeholder input and comments continually on documents developed wiki-style	↓	○	↑
<b>4. Electronic Updates</b>				
Less  More	Regularly update the MidA RPB website with information and materials for review	↓		
	Send email reminders for upcoming RPB meetings and sector-specific workshops	↓		
	Send regularly scheduled (e.g. monthly, bi-weekly) activity email updates using the MidA RPB email listserv	↓		
	Request inclusion of MidA RPB activity in MARCO and other partner organizations' and in RPB member entities' "news and announcements" type emails and newsletters	↓		
	Create and utilize more focused email distribution lists related to particular topics or work products	↓	○	

Time and Resource Intensity	Tool	Directionality <sup>4</sup>		
		From RPB	Dialogue	To RPB
<b>5. Media Outreach</b>				
Less  More	Issue press releases about the Mid-Atlantic RPB	↓		
	Issue press releases prior to public meetings, workshops, etc.	↓		
	Regularly contact relevant members of the press to proactively share information and answer questions (this would require the development and maintenance of media contact list)	↓	○	↑
	Create and maintain RSS feed(s) and social media accounts (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) to announce events, opportunities for input, and upcoming meetings	↓		↑
	Create and maintain a YouTube Channel (or other multi-media outreach)	↓		
<b>6. Stakeholder Surveys<sup>5</sup></b>				
Less  More	Conduct informal surveys of broad audience	↓		↑
	Conduct surveys before/after in-person public meetings and before/after release of draft documents	↓		↑
	Conduct more formal surveys, with a consistent distribution of survey questions and analysis of responses	↓		↑
<b>7. Informational/Communications Materials</b>				
Less  More	Federal Co-Lead (BOEM) distribute general information (fact sheets, etc.) via the RPB website and possibly the email distribution list	↓		
	Create and disseminate topic-specific resources (e.g. fact sheets, FAQs, links to articles)	↓		
	Disseminate information and ensure that federal, state, and tribal representatives, and stakeholder groups are encouraged to further broadcast information via existing channels	↓		

<sup>5</sup> If formal surveys were conducted, they would most likely be conducted by partners and shared with the RPB due to rules regarding the use of public surveys by federal agencies.