

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean Proposed Products and Services for use by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

This document was developed by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) to inform the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB) discussions during its September 24 and 25, 2013, in-person meeting. MARCO is developing products and services that will benefit ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic region and proposes to make these products and services available to the MidA RPB.

Background

Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean

MARCO is a regional ocean partnership working on shared ocean issues that benefit from interstate collaboration and coordinated problem solving. Established in 2009 by the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, MARCO has identified four shared regional priorities to improve ocean health and contribute to the high quality of life and economic vitality of our region:

- Promote the identification and protection of important ocean habitats, including sensitive and unique offshore areas;
- Collaborate on a regional approach to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas;
- Prepare Mid-Atlantic communities for the effects of climate change on coastal and ocean resources; and
- Promote improvements in ocean water quality.

MARCO embraces ocean planning as an important strategy for establishing and achieving shared goals for the use and conservation of the region's ocean resources.

Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

In 2010, a Presidential Executive Order established a National Ocean Policy (NOP) to guide the protection, maintenance, and restoration of America's oceans and coasts. The NOP requires federal agencies to work in a more coordinated, goal-oriented framework with states, tribes, and stakeholders. The NOP also calls for the creation of Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) to coordinate and implement regional ocean planning with state, federal,

tribal, and Fishery Management Council representatives. The Mid-Atlantic RPB (MidA RPB) was formally established in April 2013. The MidA RPB seeks to leverage existing efforts underway by states and regional entities, and engage stakeholders and technical experts to participate in an ocean planning process.

Leveraging Existing Resources

MARCO and the MidA RPB have both acknowledged the value of ocean planning to address a new generation of ocean management challenges and opportunities. Both entities understand that by working together we can build a solid foundation for promoting greater, more effective governmental and private investment, and for generating more attention on priority issues for the Mid-Atlantic region. Foundational documents for both entities point to the desire for and benefits of intergovernmental collaboration and the efficient use of resources.

The Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation notes that:

- The States are principal management agents of the coast and ocean and desire a strong State leadership role. At the same time, we understand that we are but one set of stakeholders with a vested interest in the health of the Mid-Atlantic region. We also recognize that many federal agencies have programs and jurisdiction within or beyond State waters. The meaningful engagement of federal, business, academic, and non-governmental entities is essential.
- Appropriate federal agencies with significant resource responsibilities in the Mid-Atlantic will be asked to participate as partners in our shared actions.

The National Ocean Council's *Ocean Planning Handbook*, notes that:

- Ocean planning should build on and complement existing programs, partnerships, and initiatives.
- Many regions have existing regional ocean governance structures or partnerships. Regional planning bodies are intended to complement these existing activities in whatever manner best meets the needs of the region.
- Consistent with existing authorities and missions, the work of regional planning bodies can also be supported by in-kind services from planning body members, external resources such as grant opportunities, and partnerships.

Products and Services for use by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body

It is MARCO's intent to make the following products and services available to the MidA RPB to advance ocean planning. As the ocean planning process evolves, these efforts may change, depending on new information, stakeholder input, and other factors.

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal:

MARCO initiated development of its Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal in October 2009 and launched the first version in December 2010. The Portal is an online, user-friendly mapping tool and resource center that consolidates the best available data and makes it accessible via the internet to a wide range of users. The Portal enables users to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites, among others.

The MidA RPB will need relevant and credible data and maps to undertake regional ocean planning. This information is necessary to comprehensively, consistently, and continually investigate, assess, analyze, and forecast human uses, ecosystem conditions, management alternatives, information and data gaps, and monitor plan effectiveness. This information must be accessible to federal, state, and local managers, tribes, academics, the private sector, and the public.

MARCO is promoting the use of its Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal as the primary ocean planning tool for the region – a one-stop user-friendly portal. **To accomplish this objective, MARCO offers the Portal for use. To the extent practicable, MARCO will work to (1) ensure data quality criteria are developed and adhered to, (2) add additional data relevant for regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic, and (3) make the Portal and associated visualization tools available to stakeholders. In order to help expand and expedite the Portal's value as a shared regional resource, MARCO encourages RPB partners to provide assistance.**

Stakeholder Engagement:

MARCO, primarily through its state Coastal Zone Management agencies and partners, has engaged stakeholders from ocean industries, ocean recreation interests, environmental and conservation groups, research institutions, and the public to help inform our activities. In December 2009, MARCO sponsored the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Stakeholder Conference (New York City) to gather stakeholder input on our draft Action Plan. Recent stakeholder engagement efforts have focused on the development of the Ocean Data Portal and providing opportunities via workshops and meetings to foster dialogue among federal and state agencies and stakeholders to share ideas on ocean planning. Further, MARCO sponsored the recent Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Workshop in April 2013, a gathering of 160 individuals representing industry, federal, state, tribal and local government, academia, the fishing community, environmental NGOs, and the public. The establishment of the Mid-A RPB was announced at this event.

MARCO and the MidA RPB seek continued stakeholder involvement in Mid-Atlantic ocean planning and want to explore as many opportunities as possible for collaboration and participation across the region. **To accomplish this objective, MARCO will assist with stakeholder engagement activities and help to create a strong communication network.**

MARCO will seek to engage maritime industries, commercial and recreational fishers, other recreational interests, offshore wind industry, and conservation interests. Insights and information gained through these engagement efforts will be shared with the MidA RPB on a regular basis.

Regional Ocean Assessment:

The National Ocean Policy and Marine Planning Handbook each call for and anticipate the development of a regional ocean assessment or series of assessments to guide regional ocean planning efforts. The scope and framework for a regional assessment, that uses maps and information to describe the ocean environment and human activities, should be guided by and reflect ocean planning priorities and specific ecosystem management objectives for the region and include consideration of relevant social science. A regional ocean assessment should also leverage work by states, federal agencies and the RPB, and incorporate and be coordinated with the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal's spatial data and information, and contribute to a consistent planning baseline the Portal is designed to support. **MARCO and the Monmouth Team (grant recipient who has this task within their scope of work) will work in consultation with the MidA RPB to initiate work on a preliminary Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment (or specific components of such Assessment). MARCO will make this available to support marine planning in the Mid-Atlantic.**