

Important note: This material was produced by an informal, ad hoc RPB workgroup. The full RPB will be discussing these ideas in detail for the first time during the September 24-25 meeting. Public input is welcome before the meeting (by sending an email to MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov) and during public input sessions at the meeting.

Mid-Atlantic RPB Stakeholder Engagement: Current mechanisms and options for the future

Robust, transparent, and effective stakeholder engagement has been a critical component of the regional ocean planning processes kicked off by the Mid Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), and will continue to be a critical component of the MidA Regional Planning Body's (RPB) ocean planning process. To date, RPB stakeholder engagement activities have largely focused on developing tools and mechanisms for information exchange and ensuring that stakeholder input opportunities occur at hosted RPB meetings. The RBP Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup believes there are opportunities to improve on the stakeholder engagement work that has been completed thus far and move us toward a vision where the stakeholder engagement process is not a specific separate task but is instead embedded in all RPB processes. In addition, the RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup feels that its ability to capture and understand the views of stakeholders will be bolstered if stakeholders self-organize both within their sectors and between sectors with shared interests such as data needs, geographic interests, and mutually beneficial actions. As such the RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup recommends that the RPB facilitate stakeholder self-organization where possible.

Progress to date and current mechanisms for information exchange:

To date, RPB stakeholder engagement activities have largely focused on developing tools and mechanisms for information exchange and ensuring that stakeholder input opportunities occur at hosted RPB meetings. Those activities and tools include the following, several of which are currently managed by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) in its role as federal Co-Lead:

- RPB website: <http://www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/index.aspx>
 - BOEM is currently hosting an RPB webpage within the BOEM website. It allows for dissemination of information to stakeholders, including RPB materials, draft ideas for public review, RPB contact information, and announcements.
- Email: MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov

- This email address is listed on the RPB website, and is available for stakeholders to provide input and ask questions. It is monitored frequently by BOEM staff and input received is shared regularly with the full RPB.
- Stakeholder Contact Database:
 - This database of over 1000 stakeholder contacts has been developed through the compilation of contacts from MARCO, the April 2013 Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Workshop, and the August 2013 RPB webinar, and individual requests to be added to RPB distribution lists since the formal establishment of the RPB in April 2013.
 - The database is used to create a distribution list to disseminate information about RPB activities and announcements to stakeholders
- Constant Contact to send out announcements
 - This is another tool supported by BOEM that allows the RPB to send announcements via email to contacts included in the MidA RPB Stakeholder Contact Database
- Hosted in person and web-based meetings that include public comment opportunities
 - April 2013 Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Workshop (hosted by MARCO)
 - The RPB was formally established at this stakeholder workshop, allowing for stakeholder engagement early in the development of the ocean planning process.
 - August 2013 Webinar
 - This webinar was held in response to stakeholder requests that the RPB provide frequent updates on progress as the RPB establishes itself and conduct business in an open and transparent manner.
 - The webinar featured presentations about the early thinking of RPB informal, ad hoc workgroups to allow stakeholder to provide input on these ideas early in the process (in advance even of the first RPB meeting on September 24-25). It also included a number of opportunities for participating members of the public to pose questions and offer comments.
 - September 24-25, 2013 Inaugural RPB Meeting (planned)
 - The first in-person RPB business meeting will include numerous opportunities for stakeholder input before and/or after RPB discussion and deliberation.

Short-term stakeholder engagement goals:

The RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup recommends building upon current stakeholder engagement work to further improve its interaction with stakeholders. While mechanisms now exist to disseminate and receive information between the RPB and stakeholders, opportunities to have meaningful, back-and-forth conversations remain limited. Future work in the short term will focus on improving our ability to have better conversations with stakeholders and to include their input throughout the ocean planning process. Actions that the RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup recommends the RPB initiate and/or complete are listed below (please note that actions requiring RPB discussion and approval are marked with a star):

- Improve capacity for communication between RPB and MA RPB stakeholders.
 - Build on the current RPB stakeholder distribution list to associate contacts with sectors. This will:
 - Allow the RPB to formalize its understanding of sectors that are participating; and
 - Allow the RPB to look for and address gaps in participating sectors, geographies, and leaders.
- ★ Encourage and empower stakeholders to self-organize.
 - While critical to the success of the RPB, effective stakeholder engagement will likely require resources beyond the RPB's capacity. As such, the RPB Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup recommends that the RPB encourage stakeholders to self-organize so that stakeholder input can be efficient and effective. This will benefit both stakeholders and the RPB. The RPB encourages stakeholders to identify common interests, such as specific geographies or ocean activities, and will facilitate self-organization when possible. Actions the RPB may take to facilitate self-organization may include:
 - a. Making participant lists of RPB activities available to the public (will require disclaimers during registration so that contact information can be shared).
 - b. Providing meeting space and opportunities for discussions before, during or after RPB events.
- ★ Develop effective processes to incorporate stakeholder input into RPB decision making.

★ The RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup recommends that the RPB develop processes to incorporate stakeholder input into RPB decisions. It is especially important to develop these processes early in the RPB's evolution, while ideas like geographic focus, regional ocean planning goals and objectives, and the charter are being developed. The input process will continue to be important as new issues are addressed in the future. There may be more than one process for different kinds of decisions, and the processes identified could be formal or informal in nature. Specifically, the RPB may wish to:

- Conduct surveys to gather stakeholder input
- Ensure that traditional engagement methods such as letter writing and position papers are incorporated into information collection and decision making
- Develop and institute a clear process for public review of options and draft materials being considered by the RPB.
- Convene sub-regional in-person public listening sessions on key topics being considered by the RPB (this would require additional fiscal resources).

★ Decide if and how a formal stakeholder advisory committee should be developed to incorporate into the RPB's stakeholder engagement process, considering Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) constraints.

- As a temporary solution, MARCO recommends implementing a Stakeholder Liaison Committee. The RPB must consider pros and cons of this strategy and others, and decide how to proceed. (See appendix).
- Because the RPB does not currently have the capacity to support a formal Federal Advisory Committee, the RPB must ensure that the stakeholder engagement strategy chosen does not trigger FACA. This will require legal guidance.
- If the Stakeholder Liaison Committee is the chosen strategy, then the RPB must make a formal request to MARCO accepting their assistance.
 - a. The RPB will then work with MARCO to ensure a process is developed to carry out the stakeholder engagement through the Stakeholder Liaison Committee.
 - b. One initial step may be to follow up with stakeholder sector leaders who offered to serve as a conduit for

information sharing at the April 2013 Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Planning Workshop.

Long term aspirations:

Ultimately, the RPB Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup would like to integrate strong, robust, effective, and transparent stakeholder engagement practices into all aspects of the RPB. This will require the development of long-term engagement mechanisms and processes that may be beyond the capacity of the RPB as it currently stands. Long term aspirations identified by the RPB Ad-hoc Stakeholder Engagement Workgroup are listed below (please note that aspirations requiring RPB discussion and approval are marked with a star):

- ★ Identify and utilize self-sufficient web-based tools (website, email addresses, announcements)
 - Currently the web-based tools that have been developed for the RPB are supported by the federal co-lead's home agency (BOEM). Given that co-leadership will change over time, it will be important to identify and develop tools that can be sustained with consistency, regardless of leadership. This would ensure continuity in our primary communication tools.
- ★ Ensure that the integration of stakeholder engagement identified above continues with RPB evolution.
 - With sufficient resources, the RPB would like to hold topic-specific in-person meetings, listening sessions, and workshops across the region as a means to capture meaningful stakeholder input as RPB decisions are made and documents are developed.
- ★ If available resources exist, consider the development of a formal Federal Advisory Committee to replace the Stakeholder Liaison Committee proposed by MARCO.

Appendix: MARCO's Suggestion for Formal Stakeholder Engagement:

- Stakeholder Liaison Committee:
The Stakeholder Liaison Committee option involves the creation of a communication network of stakeholder liaisons who would assume responsibility to serve as conduits for input to and from MARCO. Stakeholder liaisons would be expected to bring candid input that reflects the full diversity of perspectives that may exist among their constituents. MARCO would then relay information to the RPB. This process would enable stakeholder input to reach the RPB, despite the limited resources available to the RPB, and also precludes the need to develop a formal advisory body that would otherwise be required through FACA.

The Committee would be composed of sector leaders and liaisons who would communicate directly with their sector constituencies so that more people from a variety of backgrounds, interests, and geographies get a chance to participate in the ocean planning process. With this option, liaisons would meet periodically together and with MARCO; this intermingling of sectors would give stakeholders a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's interests and opportunities for avoiding conflict and fostering collaboration. MARCO would interact with the liaisons directly and on an ongoing basis.

- Benefits
 - A balanced, voluntary group based on ideas from the April 2013 Regional Workshop stakeholder panel.
 - Could be established quickly, depending on how members are appointed.
 - Nimble; can adjust as needs and situations evolve.
 - Participation on the Committee would not replace an individual's ability to express themselves openly at public meetings.
 - Multi-sector meetings encourage sectors to identify shared interests and opportunities to avoid conflict and foster collaboration.
 - The RPB is able to receive stakeholder input that would otherwise be difficult to capture given limited resources.
- Challenges
 - MARCO would take on an intermediary role, and would therefore need to earn the trust of the Liaison Committee members to assure them that MARCO will relay the information accurately to the RPB

- To ensure an effective Committee, it will be essential for sector liaisons to willingly take a leadership role in establishing two-way communication channels with their constituencies.
- The RPB would not hear the input directly from the Liaison Committee. Some information could be lost in translation and there would be no opportunity for the RPB to directly ask the Committee follow-up or clarifying questions.
- This would likely be a temporary solution for formal stakeholder engagement, as MARCO's resources are limited.