

Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Webinar Summary of Public Comments and Questions

December 8, 2016 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Summary of Participant Input

On December 8, 2016, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (RPB) convened its sixth public webinar, entitled *Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body Webinar: Updates on the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan*. During the webinar, members of the RPB gave an overview of changes made to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan (Plan) as a result of public comment in fall 2016 and provided an update on Plan implementation and other topics. During the latter half of the webinar, members of the public were provided an opportunity to ask questions of the RPB through an online question and answer (Q&A) function. This document summarizes common themes of comments and questions offered by participants, as well as responses offered by members of the RPB. Additional information, including a full recording and transcript, a participant list, the slide presentation, and a list of all questions posed via the Q&A function can be found at the RPB [website](#).¹

Webinar participants

Approximately 91 participants logged into the webinar.² Based on information provided during participant registration, the following sectors appear to have been represented:

- Commercial and recreational fishing
- Marine transportation
- Energy (both conventional and renewable)
- Undersea cables
- Non-consumptive recreation
- Science and academia
- Environmental advocacy organizations
- Policy advocacy organizations
- Federal and state government agencies
- General public

¹ <http://www.boem.gov/Environmental-Stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/index.aspx>

² An exact participant count is not possible. Webinar organizers are aware that some participants gathered in groups around shared computers.

Summary of comments and questions

During the webinar, participants asked questions and offered comments about the following topics.

Finalization of the Plan

- Several participants asked whether the final Plan submitted to the National Ocean Council (NOC) in October was modified before its certification in December. The RPB responded that no changes were made to the final Plan since it was submitted to the NOC.

Plan implementation – Public meetings and work plan

- A participant requested clarification about the timing of the next public in-person RPB meeting. The RPB indicated plans for a public in-person RPB meeting in the summer of 2017 and stated that there will be multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement before, during, and after that event.
- A participant inquired about the expected release date of the draft work plan by the RPB and asked if the public will receive an opportunity to comment on a draft work plan. The RPB stated its intention to release a draft work plan and solicit and incorporate public comments in advance of the next public RPB meeting.
- A question was asked about how the RPB intends to monitor progress on Plan implementation. The RPB stated that action leads will work to select indicators throughout the implementation process and gather data that will inform a future performance monitoring and evaluation approach. The RPB will continue to work to gather relevant information to accomplish this effort.

Plan implementation – Updates on specific actions

- A participant requested information about the timing of a workshop to refine the draft framework on Ecologically Rich Areas (ERAs) and inquired whether the findings of this workshop will be presented at the next public in-person RPB meeting. The RPB described ongoing work to consider a workshop to further explore this concept and expressed a desire to refine the draft ERA framework before the next public in-person RPB meeting.
- A participant requested more information about the Healthy Ocean Ecosystems action 4 working group focused on marine debris. The RPB described the initial gatherings of an intergovernmental working group, as well as plans for stakeholder involvement, focused on this specific action. In particular, the RPB plans to convene a facilitated public workshop on marine debris before June 2017 and will inform stakeholders of other opportunities for involvement.
- A question was asked about stakeholder engagement opportunities during the implementation of the Plan's sand mining actions. BOEM described plans to convene a regional sand management working group to advance planning of sand nourishment projects and minimize conflicts, and indicated that this working group will seek input

from stakeholders. In addition, the RPB described initial steps to engage the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with regard to sand management in the Mid-Atlantic region.

General questions and comments about the RPB

- The RPB was asked if there is a possibility that the change in presidential administration will affect Plan implementation. The RPB responded that, because the Plan has garnered broad stakeholder support, increased interagency collaboration, and integrated existing agency missions, it has already begun to improve the efficiency and transparency of ocean governance of the Mid-Atlantic. The RPB acknowledged that it cannot speculate about the next administration, and stated that agencies intend to proceed with Plan implementation unless directed otherwise.
- A participant requested further information on how to submit requests to BOEM for environmental grant funding by December 30, 2016. The RPB directed the participant to visit the website of BOEM's [Environmental Studies Program](#) or to email robert.labelle@boem.gov.
- A participant thanked the RPB for its work to improve regional ocean governance and engage stakeholders. The participant asked to be notified of opportunities to assist the RPB with Plan implementation in the future.