



Advancing Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning in the Northeast

Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) proposal to NOAA

December 10, 2010

Project Summary – In Fall 2010, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) published a framework for coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) in the northeast. The framework describes a five-year process for implementing CMSP. The current proposal to NOAA would complete the critical Phase I CMSP foundational work for NROC (and the Regional Planning Body – RPB). As funding becomes available, the other elements of the framework would be implemented. The proposal’s five project elements are:

- I. Design and implement stakeholder and “user community” outreach**, initially to define CMSP goals and vision and continuing throughout the planning process. This effort will include regional level outreach and efforts in individual states, employing interactive meetings and internet technology to maximize participation. Special emphasis will be placed on outreach to specific user groups. This process will include a participatory effort to define the technology, physical space requirements, infrastructure and other needs of particular human uses.
- II. Compile/analyze existing data, implement a data delivery portal and enhance existing data through the creation of new data products.** NROC’s regional data team, lead by NERACOOS (and including NOAA Coastal Services Center, TNC and others) are developing a prototype regional data portal, a publicly-accessible on-line spatial data server. This team will further develop twenty priority data sets identified as key for CMSP. Additionally, new data products will be developed to fill gaps in information, i.e. fisheries data.
- III. Complete a baseline characterization to provide a comprehensive overview of the ecological, social and economic characteristics of the planning area.** NROC will investigate existing models and tools with potential for developing future use scenarios. Special emphasis will be placed on developing methods to characterize the region’s habitats. It is anticipated that sub-regions or special areas of focus within the larger planning area will emerge as the baseline characterization is vetted by scientific advisors and stakeholder and staff.
- IV. Work to define “ecologically significant” areas and “human use areas” will form the basis for eventual identification of planning areas** (after the completion of this Cooperative Agreement.) Included in this element will be an investigation of decision-making tools (MARXAN, MarineMap, etc.) for their utility in the Northeast. A significant stakeholder outreach component will ensure that stakeholders understand the approach being considered to identify spatial areas.
- V. Preliminary look at regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to implement the NROC marine spatial plan.** This project element is considered key foundational work as implementation methods are often the cause of stakeholder uncertainty during planning processes.

Partners – Federal Agencies (NOAA; DOI – USGS, BOEM, USFWS, NPS; EPA; USDA; USACOE and the US Coast Guard), The Northeast Association of Regional Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS) and the Association of US Delegates to the Gulf of ME Council on the Marine Environment (USGOMA.). USGOMA is the fiscal agent for NROC. NERACOOS is the lead organization for the CMSP regional data team. Federal agency roles are numerous, as described throughout the proposal. NROC received 23 “letters of intent (LoI)” from a range of northeast non-governmental organizations and academic institutions in response to a call for concepts and approaches to CMSP in the region. NROC made general use of partner suggestions in developing the proposal and will seek additional partners (contractors) via a formal request for proposals process. These suggestions and input from the LoI documented both the strength of NROC’s partner network and the capacity for CMSP in each state.

Questions about this proposal may be sent to Ted Diers, NROC Chair, ted.diers@des.nh.gov.