

Ocean Planning Committee 2013-2014 Work Plan

The Ocean Planning Committee is one of three NROC Standing Committees. This committee was established to inform and recommend to the Council how best to approach regional issues and coordinate activities related to ocean planning in New England.

Goal: Assist in the development of a regional ocean plan to support ecosystem-based management of the Northeast's marine environment and its human uses by working collaboratively with federal, state and tribal government, NE Fisheries Management Council, and stakeholders.

Need for Action: The health of the ocean and the livelihoods that depend on it are vitally important to New England residents, visitors and businesses. In 2009, ocean-related economic activity totaled over \$11 billion in GDP for the region, providing over 190,000 jobs. People in New England greatly value this traditional ocean-related heritage and are seeking basic needs from the ocean—food, energy, conservation, and others—in new and increasingly complex ways. Simultaneously, there is much to learn about the ocean ecosystem, its natural resources, and existing uses that depend on those resources such as fishing, shipping, and recreation. Better scientific information and a better understanding of current and potential human uses of the ocean will enable New England to achieve its economic goals and ensure healthy oceans.

To meet these needs, NROC is gathering data and developing maps of human activities such as commercial fishing, shipping, and boating. NROC also is helping to enhance understanding of the ocean ecosystem by developing maps of areas used by marine mammals, fish, and birds. For these projects, NROC is working with people directly involved with these activities: scientists, fishermen, boaters, and environmental groups, as well as leaders in the shipping, ports, and energy industries. This approach ensures that people who depend on the ocean are involved in NROC's work.

The National Ocean Policy states that a Regional Planning Body will have the responsibility of developing an ocean management plan for New England. In spring 2012, New England's Governors, federal agencies, NE Fishery Management Council, and tribal governments named representatives to this Regional Planning Body. NROC shares membership with the Regional Planning Body, and thus NROC will be an important resource and contributor to the development of a New England ocean plan—a blueprint for the future of our ocean.

Strategies: The committee has determined three strategies for working toward its goal. During 2012-2014, the committee will:

1. Develop information and engage stakeholders in support of regional ocean planning.
2. Develop data and science products in support of regional ocean planning.
3. Connect and strengthen regional ocean planning efforts in NE through providing a forum for discussion, seeking new sources of capacity for NROC's work plan, and actively participating in the NE Regional Planning Body process and products.

Strategies and activities: Each of the three strategies has specific associated activities that the committee members will implement.

Strategy OP-1: Develop information and engage stakeholders in support of regional ocean planning

Activities:

OP 1.1. Conduct stakeholder engagement activities.

NROC will provide opportunities for broad public engagement and will continue to engage specific interests to develop data, discuss ocean planning goals, develop regional ocean plan-related products, and help ensure an open, transparent process. This includes the following specific projects:

- 1.1.1 Maritime Industry Engagement: Engage the following sectors via interviews, surveys, and working sessions to characterize the current state and trends, identify data and research needs, and determine regional planning issues. Sectors include:
 - Maritime commerce; including ports, shipping, tug/tow operators, pilots, and cruises
 - Offshore energy; including offshore wind, tidal, and natural gas interests
 - Aquaculture; including growers, associations, and academic extension agents
- 1.1.2 Commercial Fishing Mapping: Map commercial fishing activity using available data sources, including Vessel Trip Reports, Vessel Monitoring System, and Observer datasets. Engage the industry in the development of appropriate maps from these sources, to identify gaps, and to determine appropriate methods for collecting additional data. Future phases of this project could include the collection of new data to fill gaps using guidance obtained during this project.
- 1.1.3 Recreational Boating: Develop data characterizing recreational boating in New England, including maps of boating areas, estimates of economic importance, and information on related recreational activities from the 2012 Northeast Recreational Boating Survey. Engage the industry in the review of these data, their appropriate use, and the identification of related ocean planning issues.
- 1.1.4 Natural Resource Conservation and Science: Engage the natural resource conservation and science communities to determine the appropriate use of science and data in a regional characterization of natural marine resources. Informed by stakeholder input, identify and define related ocean planning issues for consideration.
- 1.1.5 Engage Other Ocean Stakeholder Groups: Develop projects to engage other specific stakeholders potentially including, but not limited to, recreational fishing, cultural, and tourism interests.
- 1.1.6 Engage The Public and Ocean Stakeholders in the Development and Review of Ocean Planning Goals: Engage the public through a series of listening sessions, workshops, and other meetings that are closely coordinated with Regional Planning Body activities.

Strategy OP-2: Develop data and science products in support of regional ocean planning.

Activities:

OP 2.1 Develop data products and appropriate analysis

NROC will obtain existing data and facilitate appropriate analysis and processing to produce data products related to human uses/activities and natural resources. New data products for activities, such as recreational boating and commercial fishing will be developed in partnership with NROC partners.

- 2.1.1 Develop data products for ocean planning priorities: Develop data products and maps characterizing biological and physical ocean resources and the use of ocean resources and space. Review data products with the appropriate stakeholders, experts and data providers and ensure long term availability and maintenance of ocean planning products. Coordinate data product development with stakeholder engagement activities in OP 2.1.
- 2.1.2 Review habitat classification methodologies and coordinate regional habitat mapping: Develop a regional Action Plan that identifies steps and makes recommendations for collaborating and unifying mapping, characterization, and classification approaches in terms of methodologies, structure, data requirements, and leveraged data acquisition.
- 2.1.3 Conduct and economic assessment of ocean industries: Building on information acquired through initial stakeholder engagement, develop a quantitative and qualitative assessment of potential future trends for ocean economic sectors including policy developments, technological advances and market changes.

OP 2.2 Continue to develop decision support tools such as the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, and explore opportunities for additional tool development.

Additional uses for the data portal to serve data, engage stakeholders, and provide additional utility in regional ocean planning will be examined and developed as necessary.

- 2.2.1 Maintain and develop the NortheastOceanData.org website: Continue to maintain and develop the www.northeastoceandata.org website as the primary vehicle for providing data, tools, information, and communications about data and science development for ocean planning.
- 2.2.2 Maintain the Northeast Ocean Data Viewer: Maintain and strategically develop the Northeast Ocean Data Viewer as the primary tool for viewing the entire catalog of data maintained by the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and from select external data providers such as the Multipurpose Marine Cadastre, MORIS, BOEM, and others.
- 2.2.3 Develop ocean planning data themes: Develop web content and an associated interactive map displaying data specific to ocean planning data themes, including commercial fishing, maritime commerce, energy, aquaculture, recreation, and marine life. Add themes as ocean planning advances and needs are identified. Ensure that ocean planning data themes and associated functionality are simple and support public and stakeholder engagement activities.

- 2.2.4 Assess additional decision support needs: As ocean planning advances, assess additional functionality and decision support tools for their potential use and incorporation into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal.

OP 2.3 Complete a “baseline characterization” of the New England region.

NROC will compile information and data developed through the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and discussions with stakeholders and prepare a baseline characterization summarizing the extent of knowledge about marine waters offshore New England. NROC will consider whether and ecosystem services-type approach to this product is appropriate.

Strategy OP-3: Connect and strengthen regional ocean planning efforts in NE through providing a forum for discussion, seeking new sources of capacity for NROC’s work plan, and actively participating in the NE Regional Planning Body process and products.

Activities

OP 3.1 Consider regional ocean plan implementation opportunities.

NROC will convene discussions on specific opportunities to achieve regional goals, such as identifying and addressing regulatory efficiencies, through existing federal and state programs.

OP 3.2 Seek additional opportunities/grants/partners to pursue regional ocean planning priorities.

NROC will work with existing partners and seek new opportunities to complete regional ocean planning work.

OP 3.3 Continue to identify and implement regional communications strategies.

NROC will build on efforts to develop website capabilities, two-way online communications, and preparation and marketing of project summaries. NROC will also consider opportunities to synch messaging with RPB communication efforts.

OP 3.4 Continue to convene regular Ocean Planning Committee meetings

The NROC Ocean Planning Committee will continue to serve as an important discussion vehicle for NROC members to discuss progress toward achieving regional planning goals.

OP 3.5 Serve as work-horse committee in support of Regional Planning Body process

Implement its committee work plan and commitments through existing grants, and continue to seek new sources of capacity for its work plan (grant opportunities, leveraging of other related work, and opportunities for enhanced and new partnerships).

NROC will determine with the NE Regional Planning Body when formed, the appropriate level and mechanisms for communication and coordination on work products.

Resources:

All tasks described above are supported by NROC grants. NROC will continue to seek additional opportunities in support of regional ocean planning work.

Implementation Leads:

NROC has two full-time staff responsible for implementing NROC's work plan. In addition to these staff resources, NROC members serve on the ocean planning committee and share responsibility for conducting NROC business such as developing Requests for Proposals, reviewing proposals, and other related tasks. Finally, through one of the NROC grants, NROC state members have received funding to directly support their involvement in implementing specific tasks.

Past Accomplishments:

Below is a summary of past accomplishments of the Ocean Planning Committee.

- **Comments to Ocean Policy Task Force on draft National Framework for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (2009-2010)**
NROC provided comments to the Ocean Policy Task Force during the development of the National Ocean Policy.
- **Funding to support the NROC work plan**
NROC has been awarded four separate grants, and has also leveraged a significant amount of in-kind resources, in support of its work plan.
- **Regional Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Workshops (2010 and 2011)**
NROC convened two regional ocean planning workshops: the first in late 2010 to discuss with partners development of a framework for regional ocean planning. In March 2012, NROC convened a workshop with approximately 200 people to discuss NROC's work plan.
- **NROC work plan implementation**
Following the March 2012 workshop, NROC has been implementing its work plan.
- **Launch of the Northeast Ocean Data Portal**
The Northeast Ocean Data Portal Working Group formed in early 2010, and in collaboration with NROC, launched the initial version of the portal in mid-2011.