

Background

The National Ocean Policy (NOP) is designed to enhance national stewardship of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. The NOP requires federal agencies to work in a more coordinated, goal-oriented framework with states, tribes, and stakeholders. In response to the NOP, a Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Board (RPB) was formed to help guide marine and coastal spatial planning efforts. Additionally, to address this new era of ocean challenges and opportunities, the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia in 2009 signed the Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation. The Agreement established the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) as a partnership to address shared regional priorities and provide a collective voice. MARCO and the RPB have both recognized the value of ocean planning to address a new generation of ocean management challenges and opportunities.

As summarized by MARCO, the key elements of regional ocean planning are to:

- Identify shared regional objectives to focus decision-making.
- Develop a suite of products, including a regional ocean assessment of ocean-related human uses, natural resources, and economic and cultural factors to provide a comprehensive context for decision-making.
- Engage stakeholders and scientific/technical experts to ensure managers have the best available information for decision making about ocean uses and conservation.
- Produce, coordinate, and analyze data across jurisdictions and agencies to provide better understanding of the potential effects of decisions.
- Develop and implement coordinated management actions across jurisdictions using existing ocean management efforts and authorities.
- Help federal and state agencies and tribes address inconsistencies across policies and other potential areas of conflict.

Working groups from MARCO and RPB are tasked with identifying ways the scientific community, other technical experts, and the public can be engaged in the scoping and development of the Regional Ocean Assessment (ROA). The group is also broadly interested in integrating information and expertise from these sources into the Mid-Atlantic Data Portal--an online toolkit and resource center that consolidates available data and enables state, federal, local users and the general public to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information.

The New York Ocean Action Plan

Additionally, New York State has an Ocean Action Plan, drafted by the NY Department of Environmental Conservation and by the NY Department of State that is currently under revision. The state plan is intended to complement the regional and national plans, with an obvious focus on specific issues relevant to New York. The NY State Department of Environmental Conservation has asked for input on the revision to the plan.

The New York Marine Sciences Consortium

The New York Marine Sciences Consortium, an association of colleges, universities, and degree-granting institutions with expertise and interest in marine and/or coastal science, is well positioned to play an important role in assisting in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Assessment and in reviewing the New York Ocean Action Plan, activities that are part of the National Ocean Policy. NYMSC is the voice of New York State's marine science academic community and strives to influence public policy, communicate science, and increase funding for the marine sciences within New York.

The Fall Meeting, October 18, 2014

The fall meeting of the Consortium will be devoted to these tasks:

Our overarching goals are to:

- Educate the audience regarding the NOP, ROA, and NY State OAP.
- Identify existing critical and needed datasets to be used to support the ROA and develop a perspective on how to evaluate environmental and economic ocean resources;
- Assist in the development of a process on how the ROA Plan can adapt to changing environmental and economic conditions related to the ocean and incorporate ecosystem-based management.
- Assist in identifying key issues that should be included in the New York State Ocean Action Plan.

The topic areas to be discussed in breakout sessions are:

- **Energy and Ocean Use**
- **Living Marine Resources**
- **Coastal Development, Sustainability, and Resilience**
- **Climate Change Adaptation** is an overarching concern and will be incorporated into discussions of specific resources.

The audience's input will be used for to develop a report to be presented to NY State DEP and DOS to aid in revision of the NY OAP, as well as to Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Committee to aid in development of the Regional Ocean Assessment and Mid-Atlantic Data Portal.

In addition to the above agenda, undergraduate and graduate students at Marine Sciences Consortium member institutions are welcome to present their NY marine science-related research at a poster session during the meeting. The best undergraduate and graduate-student posters will receive an award and cash prize.

