

# Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean

## *A Partnership in Ocean Conservation*



### **Importance:**

Mid Atlantic offshore ocean waters are becoming increasingly busy with a great diversity of uses competing for available space including shipping, fishing (commercial and recreational), pipelines, cable crossings, and recreational activities. It is likely to become more crowded in the future with proposals for renewable energy on the rise. All of these uses are important to the Mid-Atlantic's economy and provide services (including food, transportation, and recreation) that the region depends on. With uses of offshore resources increasing, now is the time to start planning for the future by developing offshore spatial plans. A comprehensive offshore plan can recognize existing use areas and provide information and guidance for siting future uses while adapting to changes in usage patterns overtime.

### **What is Marine Spatial Planning:**

Marine Spatial Planning is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in "Marine Spatial Planning: A Step-by Step Approach towards Ecosystem-based Management" (2009) as:

- "...a practical way to create and establish...use of marine space and their interactions between its uses, to balance demands for development with the need to protect marine ecosystems, and to achieve social and economic objectives in an open and planned way."
- "a public process for analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives..."

### **Objectives**

Marine spatial planning is seen by MARCO member states as a means to advance most, if not all, of the four goals identified by the Mid-Atlantic Governors: Climate Change Adaptation, Ocean Habitat Protection, Offshore Renewable Energy and Water Quality Improvement. MARCO member states are each taking steps to develop offshore spatial plans for ocean waters off their coast and will coordinate through MARCO to ensure plans are integrated across the Mid-Atlantic region.

### **For More Information Marine Spatial Planning go to:**

<http://www.unesco-ioc-marinesp.be/>

# Marine Spatial Planning

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### **Marine Spatial Planning Process:**

Marine Spatial Planning is an iterative and adaptive process. It is most successful when stakeholders have a voice throughout the process. Ehler and Douvere (2009) describe Marine Spatial Planning process with the following (non linear) steps:

- *Identifying need and establishing authority*
- *Obtaining financial support*
- *Organizing the process through pre-planning*
- *Defining and analyzing existing conditions*
- *Defining and analyzing future conditions*
- *Preparing and approving the spatial management plan*
- *Implementing and enforcing the spatial management plan*
- *Monitoring and evaluation performance*
- *Adapting the marine spatial management process*

### **Examples of Marine Spatial Planning Work Underway**

#### **Rhode Island:**

Rhode Island is developing an Ocean Special Area Management Plan that will delineate use areas for Rhode Island's ocean waters through a planning process that integrates the best available science with open public input and involvement.

**For more information:** <http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/>

#### **California:**

California worked with NOAA to develop the California Ocean Use Atlas Project. This effort utilized participatory-Geographic Information System as a tool for capturing where different uses occur in California's offshore ocean waters. Nearly 30 different human uses were identified.

**For more information:** [http://mpa.gov/science\\_analysis/atlas.htm](http://mpa.gov/science_analysis/atlas.htm)

*To be notified of updates to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean website and to receive announcements, please send an e-mail request to: [marco@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:marco@dep.state.nj.us)*