National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

NOAA Strategic Priority

Supporting Effective Coastal & Marine Spatial Planning

There are new demands being placed on our ocean and coasts. Competition for ocean space is increasing among fishing and recreational interests, shipping companies, alternative energy developers, industries and the military.

The longstanding approach to managing the ocean typically involves planning for individual sectors, such as maritime transportation, fishing, or oil and gas leasing. However planning by single sector often ignores other direct competition for ocean space and does not take into account the effects all the other ocean users have on the same ecosystem.

An Effective Approach to Managing Our Oceans

Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning is a comprehensive, adaptive, integrated, ecosystem-based, and transparent spatial planning process, based on sound science, for analyzing current and anticipated uses of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes areas.

Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning identifies areas most suitable for various types or classes of activities in order to reduce conflicts among uses, reduce environmental impacts, facilitate compatible uses, and preserve critical ecosystem services to meet economic, environmental, security, and social objectives.

In practical terms, it provides a public policy process for society to better determine how the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes are sustainably used and protected now and for future generations.

For instance, marine spatial planning in the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary has been critical to determining how close ships can travel to protected areas in order to protect marine life from ship groundings and accidental spills. Likewise, marine spatial planning helped NOAA identify zones in and around California's Monterey Bay sanctuary for Jet Ski operation and for the safe disposal of sediment from harbor dredging.

A Plan for Our Oceans, Coasts and Great Lakes

Coastal and marine spatial planning looks at the ocean and asks: What do we, as a society, want from the ocean and for the ocean and how can human uses be allocated to achieve our goals, both current and future? It brings together data, policy analysis and decision support tools in new ways that help inform planning for all uses and support traditional sector-based management programs. Some key components of coastal and marine spatial planning include:

Spatial Data and Planning Tools:

- *Ecosystem Information* – Combines data on relevant habitats, species and ecological processes and helps to identify sensitive areas, high value ecosystems and ecosystem benefits.

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- *Ocean Uses Assessments* – Maps and analyzes current and likely future ocean uses by kinds, patterns, impacts, and economic significance.
- *Decision Support Tools* – Information that enables users to visualize, evaluate and select viable spatial locations of compatible, competing, and conflicting uses to help make decisions.

Policy Leadership – To develop and implement marine spatial plans

- *Presidential Initiative* - President Obama's Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, established by Presidential Memorandum of June 12, 2009, seeks to address the environmental challenges that face our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes. This task force has several key charges, which include developing a framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning.
- *Regional Engagement* – NOAA's initiatives are designed to inform, support and advance regional marine spatial planning by bringing all of the oceans' users together. Users like fishermen, boaters, industry, the military, environmental groups, and state, local and tribal governments will come together to create spatial planning management plans for their areas.

NOAA's Capabilities in a Multi-Use Marine Ecosystem

Proper marine spatial planning requires a detailed understanding of human-use patterns and effects, ecosystems, and natural resources. NOAA has capabilities already in place that will be used in a combined effort for marine spatial planning.

- **Mapping Ocean Uses** – In recognizing the growing need for data on where, how and why people are using the ocean, NOAA is part of a multi-agency ocean mapping effort to evaluate the patterns of ocean use and any potential conflicts.
- **Hydrographic Surveys** measure the depth and bottom configuration of water bodies in order to produce the nation's nautical charts.
- **EcoGIS** is a geospatial- and ecosystem-based Geographic Information System (GIS) approach to fisheries management. GIS software provides visual representation of important ecosystem characteristics necessary for public communication and decision-making.
- **Multipurpose Marine Cadastre** – Working in partnership with the Depart. of the Interior, NOAA is providing a variety of spatial data on ocean features, regulatory regimes and human activities in a comprehensive GIS designed to support marine spatial planning.
- **The NOAA Legislative Atlas** provides users with an interactive map of the U.S. coastline that helps regional collaborators understand the governance system of U.S. oceans and coasts.
- **Interagency Partnerships and Requirements** – NOAA is involved in many partnerships to develop tools to help society balance its uses of ocean resources while sustaining the health of coastal and marine ecosystems and provision of essential ecosystem services. NOAA has a leadership role in the interagency Federal Geographic Data Committee, promoting the use of geospatial data on a national basis.

Learn more about NOAA's coastal and marine spatial planning activities at http://www.msp.noaa.gov.

To learn more about NOAA, visit http://www.noaa.gov.

Web Resources

NOAA's Coastal Services Center: http://www.csc.noaa.gov/

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management: http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/

Federal Geographic Data Committee: http://www.fgdc.gov

The Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force: http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans/