

US - Mid-Atlantic



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Overview

In 2010, President Barack Obama issued an Executive order that established the first-ever national ocean policy, created a National Ocean Council composed of cabinet-level officials, and directed federal agencies to implement [coastal and marine spatial planning \(CMSP\)](#) consistent with the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force.

In response to this order, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (RPB) was formed in 2013. The RPB consists of representatives from states (New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia), tribes, federal agencies, and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The RPB is building on the regional ocean planning goals put forth by the [Mid-Atlantic Governor's Agreement on Ocean Conservation](#), establishing the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) in 2009. MARCO is a state-led initiative with goals that complement those of the RPB.

Marine Planning

Practical approaches to ocean and coastal decision-making.

<http://marineplanning.org>

Like other regional planning efforts in the U.S., the planning process is not intended to create new regulations, but rather to advance the shared regional priorities of MARCO and the Mid-Atlantic RPB are:

- Preparing the region's coastal communities for the impacts of climate change
- Collaborating on a regional approach to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas
- Coordinating the protection of important marine habitats, including sensitive and unique offshore areas such as corals, canyons, and migration corridors
- Promoting improvements in ocean water quality

Stated goals of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan are to:

- Promote ocean ecosystem health, functionality, and integrity through conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration
- Plan and provide for existing and emerging ocean uses in a sustainable manner that minimizes conflicts, improves effectiveness and regulatory predictability, and supports economic growth.

TNC's Role

- Scientific/Technical expertise

The Nature Conservancy provided scientific and technical expertise through participation on the MARCO Portal Project team. The [Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal](#) is a repository for datasets depicting human uses of the ocean, biological, and environmental datasets relevant to ocean planning. TNC scientists informed the development of portal tools and features and created and prepared datasets for inclusion on the portal. These include a dataset depicting the locations of artificial reefs, and regional-scale benthic habitat maps using NAMERA ([Northwest Atlantic Marine Ecoregional Assessment](#)) methodology.

Project Partners

Lead Institution: [Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean \(MARCO\)](#)

MARCO Portal Project Team: [Ecotrust](#), [Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute](#), Rutgers [University Edward J. Bloustein School](#) and [Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis](#)

Status

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The Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan was completed and approved by the National Ocean Council in 2016

Fact Sheets and Project Links

[Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan](#)

[Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean \(MARCO\)](#)

[MARCO Fact Sheet](#)

[Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal](#)

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Photo credit: © Jason Houston

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