

Northeast Regional Planning Body

Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast United States

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Section 1: Introduction

This document provides the overall framework for ocean planning in the Northeast United States. Its intent is to provide details on the overall approach and work of the Northeast Regional Planning Body (NE RPB), the formal entity charged with developing the regional ocean plan for the Northeast pursuant to the National Ocean Policy as described below.

Background

The health of the ocean and 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, recreation 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. Fortunately, ocean planning activities and partnerships have been underway for years at local, state and regional scales in New England.

A Presidential Executive Order signed in July 2010 establishing a [National Ocean Policy](#) gives further momentum to these regional efforts. As described in the National Ocean Policy, Regional Planning Bodies in 9 regions of the United States are tasked with developing regional ocean products or a plan that builds on existing efforts and is driven by the specific needs of each geography. Additional information regarding the National Ocean Council is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans>.

The NE RPB convened its inaugural meeting in November 2012, met for a second time in April 2013, and met in January 2014 to review this framework. As directed by the National Ocean Policy, its membership includes federal, tribal, state, and New England Fishery Management Council representatives, and leadership is shared by federal, state and tribal co-leads. The Governors of each New England state nominated two agency representatives to the NE RPB, with two ex-officio members representing Canada and New York state. The composition of the NE RPB in part reflects the geography of the planning area, which includes state and federal marine waters of the New England states (i.e., from Long Island Sound, north around Cape Cod and including the United States and state waters of the Gulf of Maine.)

The NE RPB meetings held to date were open to the public and designed to build a common understanding of the task to develop a regional ocean plan and to begin the public discussion on what such an effort should seek to accomplish. Initial discussions resulted in NE RPB member agreement that this initiative should focus on ocean waters of the region, while

recognizing some interest and potential need to connect this effort to estuarine and coastal issues where appropriate. Initial discussions also resulted in general consensus to implement a phased approach from 2012 through 2015. A first phase of identifying goals, objectives and actions, extending through 2013; a second phase of developing products to achieve these objectives extending through and beyond 2014; and a third phase of implementing initial products and assessing progress toward achieving goals in 2015 and beyond. An additional key result of these initial discussions was the agreement that regional ocean planning in the Northeast needs to be conducted through an open and transparent public process. Finally, the NE RPB began discussing potential goals and objectives, leading to the development of this draft framework following the process described below. At its January 2014 meeting, the NE RPB reviewed public comment on the draft framework and discussed and approved the revised goals and objectives, as set out in Section Three below.

It is the overarching goal of this initiative to develop a regional ocean plan and associated products for New England waters by early 2016, per the National Ocean Policy. Collectively, the goals and objectives (plus their related outcomes) provide the outline for the content of this plan, as well as provide context for the future work of the NE RPB. Completed outcomes and the results of NE RPB decisions will provide significant content and further details.

Development of the Framework for Regional Ocean Planning in the Northeast

This framework builds on NE RPB discussions and additional public discussions including:

1. NE RPB meetings in November 2012 and April 2013 that were open to the public. An outcome of the April 2013 NE RPB meeting was the identification of draft goals and potential objectives that the NE RPB wished to discuss with the public.
2. Extensive stakeholder engagement between NE RPB meetings.
3. A series of public meetings convened by the NE RPB to discuss draft goals and potential objectives in May and June 2013. Ten meetings were held during this time, with at least one in each New England state, during a May-July 2013 public comment period where public input was sought on draft goals and potential objectives. These draft goals and potential objectives were also posted on-line and input solicited electronically. An additional public discussion was held at the June 2013 New England Fishery Management Council meeting.
4. Following the May-July 2013 public comment period, public input was used to revise draft goals and objectives, which were posted on-line in September 2013, requesting additional public comment in advance of the January 22-23, 2014 NE RPB meeting.
5. Internal NE RPB member and work group discussions, conference calls, and meetings.

6. A series of public meetings in each New England state from October 2013-January 2014 to discuss the revised draft goals and objectives.

The timeframe for work reflected in this framework is 2014-2015 and the tasks and products that the NE RPB believes are achievable in this timeframe. The NE RPB anticipates that some aspects of this framework will evolve as new knowledge is gained, including through public input and discussion, and as policy and management issues arise. This document builds on that context and includes:

1. A schedule for decisions to be made by the NE RPB, which is provided at the end of Section 1 of this document.
2. An overview of the approach and details for public engagement and participation in the regional ocean planning process, which is provided in Section 2. Robust public participation is fundamental to successful regional ocean planning in the Northeast.. The NE RPB has strongly acknowledged this principle as integral to each step of planning (steps include goal setting, development of objectives and tasks to accomplish these goals, development of specific data products, and other phases) .
3. Principles, goals, objectives, actions and specific tasks that are proposed to advance Northeast regional ocean planning in 2014-2015. Section 3 Captures these elements.

Framework Elements

This section defines the elements of the framework: principles, goals, objectives, and actions. The purpose of these definitions is to provide a common terminology, drawing upon previous NE RPB discussions and public input.

Principles are defined as high-level elements for New England regional ocean planning that form the foundation of, and thus guide the overall outcomes and planning process for, this effort. These principles were the subject of much of the initial discussion of the NE RPB and include:

1. The ocean and its resources are managed for the benefit of the public, now and in the future.
2. The historic, cultural and spiritual importance of the ocean are important to consider.
3. The present and past connection between communities, watersheds and ocean is important.
4. New ocean uses are emerging and existing ocean uses are changing.
5. There is concern about changing ocean health and ecosystem conditions.
6. Better data and information, including traditional knowledge, will lead to better understanding and decision making.
7. There is a need for improved government efficiencies and transparency.
8. There is a need to adapt as environmental, social and economic conditions change.

9. Regional ocean planning must be implemented through existing authorities and regulations. Neither the National Ocean Policy nor regional ocean planning create or change existing authorities.

Additionally, the NE RPB has committed to an open and transparent process for Northeast regional ocean planning. Details on the approach to meeting this commitment are provided in Section 2 below.

Goals are defined as aspirational statements of purpose that also organize subsequent objectives and actions. The three draft goals that have been discussed to date are:

1. Effective Decision-making
2. Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems
3. Compatibility Among Past, Current and Future Ocean Uses

Objectives are specific, action-oriented statements of how goals can be achieved, which are intended to be measurable and attainable. Objectives are specific to each goal and were the focus of much public discussion beginning in the spring of 2013. Section 3 of this document provides the draft objectives.

Associated with each objective are potential outcomes. Outcomes are statements of results that identify the intended product of each objective. Collectively, the outcomes will form the content of the regional ocean plan for the Northeast.

Note that there is overlap between some of the tasks under separate goals, and that progress toward some goals' objectives will be directly related to progress under other objectives. For example, furthering the discussion of the utility of the Northeast Data Portal (as described in Objective 3 under the Effective Decision Making Goal) will depend on the development of products developed under the Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Goal. Thus, goals are related to each other. Additionally, some objectives and outcomes will evolve as NE RPB decisions and public input inform the future direction of ocean planning in the Northeast. For that reason, it is important to provide milestones for future NE RPB decisions.

Actions are specific tasks necessary to complete each objective. They are practical and consider available capacity (e.g., agency in-kind, ocean planning staff, funding, partnerships, etc.) and timeline. As stated above, the timelines of actions relate directly to the milestone schedule of future NE RPB decisions. Actions for each objective are provided in Section 3.

NE RPB Milestones

The schedule below articulates milestones for upcoming NE RPB meetings and decision-making targets for the NE RPB aimed at achieving outcomes. Section 3 provides detailed timelines for individual tasks that will lead to these NE RPB decisions, including public input vehicles,

events and their timing, in recognition of the need for regional ocean planning to be transparent. Thus, this milestone schedule is a high-level overview of the NE RPB process from 2014 through early 2016. Importantly, this schedule can be flexible and adjusted over time, as future progress and decisions are made..

2014 Schedule

January	NE RPB meets to approve goals and objectives and move forward on related tasks
April/May	Public workshops to discuss progress toward goals related to Effective Decision-Making and Healthy Ocean and Coastal Systems
June	NE RPB meeting to review progress toward each goal, including discussing the goal related to Compatibility Among Past, Current and Future Ocean Uses
September/October	Public meetings and workshops for feedback on progress toward each goal
November	NE RPB meeting to review progress toward each goal and determine appropriate next steps

2015 Schedule

Spring	Workshops/public meetings to review baseline assessment and progress on the use of marine life and ocean use data, regulatory coordination and future scenario development
May/June	NE RPB meeting to review draft products for each goal, discuss options for NE RPB future role and the maintenance and advancement of ocean planning products, including the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (data portal)
Fall	NE RPB meeting to review revised products for each goal; determine preferred options for NE RPB's future role and the advancement of ocean planning priorities
Fall/Winter	Public meetings to review revised products

2016 Schedule

Winter	NE RPB meeting to approve final products for each goal and determine NE RPB future
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It is important to note that the draft goals, objectives, actions and related tasks in Section 3 below are draft pending NE RPB approval. The intent of providing accompanying details about

tasks in Section 3 is to ensure that ideas about potential, practically-focused tasks inform public and NE RPB discussion of these draft goals and objectives.

Section 2: Communications and Public Engagement

The NE RPB is committed to a transparent, open approach to regional ocean planning and considers such an approach vital for its success. The NE RPB defines success in this context as an open, transparent, efficient process that engages the public and focuses on public involvement at, and participation in, key decision points.

Specific vehicles for engagement are developed according to the issues being discussed and determination of how to best engage interested parties; thus, there is an understanding that stakeholder engagement needs, and corresponding activities, will evolve to meet specific needs and as improvements are made to existing efforts.

As described below, there are several layers of regional ocean planning communications and engagement. In all of these efforts, three considerations underlie their development and implementation:

1. An open, transparent and efficient process requires multiple activities, and the specific purpose of each activity must be clear to stakeholders (e.g., to review products, to help design and implement projects, to help gather data, to help inform NE RPB decisions, or other purposes).
2. Stakeholder engagement activities must be practically designed to maximize use of limited resources and to minimize impositions on peoples' time to the extent possible.
3. As stakeholder engagement needs evolve over time, the specific activities underway will similarly evolve. Periodic assessment of stakeholder needs and engagement activities is vital to identifying and making any necessary adjustments.

The following communications and stakeholder engagement activities are underway and will be implemented as part of work plan activities described previously and in more detail in Section 3 below.

Formal NE RPB input and Participation

Direct input and participation in NE RPB deliberations has several aspects, as described below.

NE RPB Meetings

Since its first meeting in November 2012, the NE RPB has conducted its meetings open to the public with time allotted for public comment as specific topics are discussed. These meetings enable public input in a formal setting and comments are recorded for the record and, where resources allow, videos of the meetings have been recorded and posted on-line. Meetings of the NE RPB are scheduled by considering other, existing meetings to avoid potential conflicts and maximize attendance. In addition, the NE RPB encourages written comment on both specific

topics before the RPB and general feedback about the planning process. Such correspondence is made available to the entire NE RPB and posted on-line for public access.

The NE RPB has considered feedback about the manner in which it gathers public input at its formal meetings and has made adjustments based on that feedback. The NE RPB will continue to seek input to ensure its formal meetings are appropriately conducted.

Other Public Meetings Held Throughout the Region

In addition to its formal NE RPB meetings, at key decision points in the regional ocean planning process the NE RPB has and will continue to convene public meetings focused on gathering stakeholder input. For example, during the drafting of regional ocean planning goals and objectives, the NE RPB held a series of ten public meetings, at least one in each New England state, to discuss draft/potential goals and objectives. These meetings were less structured than the formal NE RPB meetings described above, enabling more direct interaction between members of the public and NE RPB members. These meetings were convened specifically to enable public discussion and participation in the critical step of goal-setting.

The NE RPB will continue to conduct such meetings at important decision points in the ocean planning process; for example, to consider options for advancing specific objectives in the Fall of 2014; reviewing baseline characterization information and progress on decided options in spring of 2015; and to review plan products in late 2015. The schedule and specific purposes/points of discussion for these public meetings will evolve as the planning process proceeds.

State Advisory Groups

NE RPB state members are also using existing state advisory entities to provide input into the regional planning process. For example, the Massachusetts Ocean Advisory Commission (formally set up as part of the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan process, pursuant to the Massachusetts Oceans Act) and the stakeholder advisory panel for the Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan are periodically provided updates and opportunities to discuss regional ocean planning with RPB members and staff. New Hampshire has an existing Port Advisory Committee and Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee which have periodically received regional planning updates and opportunities for discussion. In Maine, NE RPB members have organized an advisory group to discuss regional ocean planning. In Connecticut, existing forums are also being used, such as the state's Maritime Commission. These state-specific forums provide an important, additional vehicle for input into the NE RPB process.

Online Comment Submission

In addition to convening specific in-person meetings, the NE RPB solicits public input through its website. For example, preliminary draft goals and actions (that were discussed during the public meetings in May-June 2013 described above) were posted on-line with an on-line comment form. Such avenues for public input will be used in the future.

Other Communications Tools

From a general communications standpoint, the NE RPB uses its website and email list of interested parties as additional vehicles for informing the public of progress, products, upcoming events and other related news. Contractor support through the consulting firm ERG is used to ensure that website content is up-to-date and timely. Additionally, the NE RPB is developing a series of fact sheets describing specific projects and the ocean planning effort overall as another outreach tool (i.e., for distribution at meetings and events.) These communications efforts are informed by an overall communications strategy that includes specific rationale, intended audience and focus of each communications vehicle. This strategy also enables the NE RPB and ocean planning staff to periodically assess its success and the success of specific communications vehicles in meeting the overall goal for an open, transparent process, as described above.

Project Specific Engagement

In addition to the engagement and communications efforts described above that relate to the formal NE RPB process, there are engagement aspects to many individual projects. These include the following efforts to date:

1. **Commercial fisheries mapping.** This project has included over 50 meetings to date with commercial fishermen, scientists, and fisheries managers throughout New England. The approach has been and will continue to be to use existing meetings wherever possible (e.g., New England Fishery Management Council, state advisory boards, fishing sector meetings, state-specific association meetings, etc.) The purpose of these meetings is to review draft products related to commercial fishing (e.g., approaches to depicting the activity of certain fisheries), identify concerns, and discuss ocean planning issues overall. Future phases of this mapping effort will continue these types of interactions.
2. **Recreational fishing.** There will be a specific focus on identifying and implementing a project (or projects) to appropriately depict recreational fishing activity as well. Some work to date has focused on the charter/for-hire portion of the fishery in New England, but additional work would be needed on that topic and/or to address other aspects of recreational fishing. The approach would be to engage members of the recreational fishery in scoping and implementing any such project, potentially through partnership with the New England states and SeaPlan.
3. **Recreational boating survey.** In partnership with SeaPlan, this project was designed, implemented, and products reviewed to date with the recreational boating industry (e.g., Marine Trades Associations and other such organizations in each state). Thousands of boaters in the region participated in the survey that resulted in important products and key feedback for ocean planning. A series of workshops in New England states to review draft survey results and to discuss regional ocean planning was held in April 2013. Further engagement with the industry will build upon this work.
4. **Engagement of maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture sectors.** A series of work sessions were held with New England representatives of these three economic sectors in December 2012, following an extensive effort to engage these industries that included 39

individual interviews to help frame engagement. Over 150 people attended these work sessions in total, which were designed to discuss regional ocean planning issues and to help develop information characterizing the industries (i.e., maps and other related data.) Summary documents from this effort are available on-line at <http://northeastoceancouncil.org/committees/ocean-planning/>. This work provides initial input regarding potential issues for regional ocean planning to address from the perspective of these industries and has helped develop new data products as recommended by these industries. Since these work sessions, additional engagement has occurred through presentations and updates at existing industry meetings and forums. This work provides a solid foundation to engage these three industries as appropriate moving forward.

5. **Natural resources characterization.** Through this project, the environmental advocacy community has been engaged through a series of meetings in each New England state with environmental non-governmental organizations to discuss potential issues for regional ocean planning to address. Other opportunities to engage environmental organizations are currently being scoped and will likely occur in May and June 2014. Additionally, on a parallel timeline, marine scientists in the region are being engaged to identify potential data related to natural resources, and to provide guidance on potential map products depicting natural resource distribution and abundance. Next steps for this work are described below in Section 3 and will include regional workshops bringing resource scientists, environmental organizations, and other interested parties together to discuss potential methodologies for product development.
6. **Other recreation interests.** Through a partnership with Surfrider Foundation, other recreational interests beyond boating were engaged throughout the last six months of 2013. This effort had two main purposes: first, to reach out to recreational interests (e.g. dive clubs, wildlife viewing, non-motorized boating clubs and others) to provide information on the regional ocean planning effort in general and opportunities to be engaged; and second, to explore potential project ideas for obtaining potential additional information related to these interests (e.g., mapping areas of importance.) Next steps for this work are described below in Section 3 and include scoping and implementation of specific project(s) to better characterize recreational activity.

In addition to these ongoing and recent efforts, other specific projects, described in Section 3 below, will also have engagement components that will likely include opportunities for additional stakeholders to provide input and information into ocean planning, such as the efforts to characterize recreational fishing activity.

General Engagement Opportunities through Existing Meetings and Publications

NE RPB members and ocean planning staff provide routine updates at existing meetings and through existing publications. These opportunities reach many interested parties and enhance opportunity for discussion. Examples include:

1. Semi-annual meetings of the North Atlantic Ports Association (i.e, port directors from Maine-Virginia) and individual Harbor/Port Safety Advisory Group meetings.
 2. Periodic updates at New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) meetings, NEFMC Advisory Panel meetings, state fisheries advisory committee meetings and others.
 3. Presentations at American Wind Energy Association events
 4. Presentations at Environmental Business Council of New England events
 5. Publications in regional fisheries-focused publications and periodicals
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Section 3: Goals, Objectives and Actions

This section describes draft goals, draft objectives and actions and tasks to advance Northeast regional ocean planning in the 2014-2015 timeframe; see Section 1 for definitions of related terms.). At its January 22-23, 2014 meeting, the NE RPB approved the goals and objectives (as revised in this document) and agreed to move forward with tasks

Public involvement is a key component of all potential actions and accompanying tasks captured in this section, reflecting the NE RPB's commitment to stakeholder engagement, which is described in detail in Section 2.

Accompanying each objective and its related actions are additional details describing specific tasks, including an overview of timing and specific capacity available for task completion.

Finally, Section 3 concludes with an Overarching Objective that is pertinent to all three draft goals and relates to periodically assessing progress toward completing objectives.

Goal: Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems

Develop a planning framework to protect, restore, and maintain healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems that provide social, cultural, spiritual, and economic benefits that are sustainable in the future. Account for changing environmental conditions and new information as it becomes available. Respect the intrinsic value of the ocean, its biodiversity, and act as its steward/caretaker, recognizing humans as part of the ecosystem.

Objective 1. Characterize the Region's Ecosystem, Economy and Cultural Resources

Action 1-1. Using existing data, produce spatial characterizations of abundance and distribution of bird, sea turtle, shellfish, marine mammal, fish and bottom (benthic) habitats. Consider incorporating issues such as historic trends, future changes from climate change and other factors, and scientific uncertainty. Consider applicability and utility of related products related to ocean acidification, biodiversity, productivity, non-native/invasive species,

ecology and species biology (including migration), and the physical/oceanographic environment.

Action 1-2. Assess regional efforts to identify areas of ecological importance or measure the health of the marine system. The first step in this action will be to define these terms (i.e., ecological importance and health) to provide further specificity and direction. Include a review of studies assessing the vulnerability of marine life/habitats to human activities and climate change, and the current state of the science regarding cumulative impact assessment to help identify science and data needs. The purpose of this action is to better understand scientific and data issues and projects underway or recently completed, to inform future NE RPB decisions on the applicability and appropriateness of such work for regional ocean planning.

Action 1-3. Identify resources/areas that are of cultural, historic, ecological, or spiritual significance to tribes.

Action 1-4. Develop spatial and other related information for shipping, commercial fishing, boating, recreational fishing, energy, marine infrastructure (including submarine cables), aquaculture and recreation. Engage stakeholders in project design and implementation data development and product review.

Action 1-5. Develop an assessment of the regional maritime economy by compiling existing analyses/data; include specific assessment of working waterfronts and link to use of marine waters.

Action 1-6. Develop a regional baseline assessment incorporating results of Actions 1-1 through 1-5 above.

Action 1-7. Pursue incorporating results of Actions 1-1 through 1-6 above into Objective 3 under the goal related to Effective Decision-Making above.

Outcomes

- Characterization of human activities, the ocean and coastal economy, cultural resources, and marine life and habitats in a baseline assessment.
- Engagement of scientific community and the shipping, commercial fishing, boating, recreational fishing, energy, environmental and recreation communities, and other stakeholders.
- NE RPB decisions on the incorporation of resulting products into existing decision-making as appropriate, provided that specific caveats associated with each product are clearly articulated.

Objective 1 Tasks

1. Informed by discussions with the scientific community, integrate existing data and model output to characterize marine mammal, bird, and fish distribution/abundance. Build on and integrate existing federal, state, and NEFMC projects where possible. Provide periodic opportunities for public input and feedback about methods and draft products.
2. Summarize efforts that utilize marine life and benthic data to classify habitat, characterize areas of ecological importance, assess ecosystem health and/or deterioration, determine vulnerability and model cumulative impacts. Develop options for proceeding with any or none of these assessments, beginning by clearly defining these terms. Convene NE RPB, scientists and stakeholders to discuss options to inform NE RPB decisions on how to proceed/what option(s) to implement.
3. Convene a cultural work group composed of tribes and federal and state agency representatives to:
 - a. Review data portal with tribes
 - b. Develop maps of cultural resources using existing tribal and federal/state data
 - c. Identify and prioritize gaps associated with existing data
 - d. Develop options for using existing data to identify areas of tribal significance
 - e. Determine how to expand Narragansett submerged paleocultural landscape research to other areas
 - f. Secure funding to improve tribal oral history standards, including best practices for utilizing technology combined with traditional skills to gather data
4. Continue to engage fishing community in further refinement of maps characterizing fishing activity. Consider utility of resulting products based on considerations including changing management, climate change, inherent data limitations and other factors.
5. Map additional recreational uses (beyond recreational boating) and, if possible, determine the economic contribution of these activities to the regional economy.
6. Continue to engage the maritime commerce sector in the development of maps characterizing the use of marine waters for navigation, transportation, and security. Continue discussions about potential/future scenarios building on existing efforts by U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Coast Guard and state/regional port authorities.

(Objective 1 continued)

7. Continue to engage the energy and marine infrastructure sectors in the development of maps characterizing the use of marine waters for energy and marine infrastructure. Continue discussions about potential future scenarios for each energy sector that build on existing efforts by BOEM, US. Department of Energy, the New England states, and industry projections.
8. Continue to engage the aquaculture sector in the development of maps characterizing their use of marine waters and discuss potential future scenarios, particularly in federal waters.
9. Conduct an assessment of the New England maritime economy that builds on economic characterizations conducted for ocean planning, by NE RPB agencies, and other sources. Include assessment of issues related to working waterfronts (e.g., identification of publically-funded projects.)
10. Integrate information from ocean planning projects to date, the data portal, and other existing sources to develop and periodically update (as products become available) a written regional baseline assessment. Potential chapters include:
 - a. overview of the region's geography
 - b. oceanography and water column
 - c. geology and seabed
 - d. habitat and marine life
 - e. archaeological and cultural resources
 - f. ocean uses and regional economy (integrating the economic assessment)
 - g. climate change and changing conditions

Products/Results

Interactive maps depicting marine mammal, bird, and fish distribution/abundance available through the data portal. Each map product clearly explained through an "About this Map" feature.

1. A review of existing efforts to utilize marine life and habitat data and development of potential options for NE RPB consideration; NE RPB decision on which/if any options to implement.
2. Maps depicting areas/resources of cultural importance incorporated into the data portal.
3. Maps of commercial fishing activity incorporated into the data portal.
4. Maps of recreational fishing, diving, kayaking, surfing, and other recreational uses incorporated into the data portal.
5. Maps of maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture incorporated into the data portal, and methods for assessing industry trends/scenarios identified.
6. Regional economic assessment incorporated into the baseline assessment.
7. Baseline information consolidated into single report for review by public and NE

RPB.

(Objective 1 continued)

8. For all products developed for this objective, incorporation of measures to enhance their utility in decision-making and include results of NE RPB decisions.

Capacity

1. NE RPB agency in-kind through participation in internal work group to scope projects, review preliminary products, etc. NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science has offered assistance as well.
2. Staff develops requests for proposals, scopes projects, manages contractors and ensures coordination with other projects and review products.
3. Technical committee, comprised of scientific experts in the region, provides input to development of products, reviews methodologies, etc.
4. Data/science contractors for natural resource products and integrate in data portal.
5. Project management contractor for product development.
6. Baseline assessment contractor to compile baseline and economic assessment.
7. Public engagement contractor to assist with public meetings/workshops and other specific meetings to review products and methods with funding as needed from public engagement contract.
8. Additional federal and state in-kind, based on existing/related projects such as:
 - a. The Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS): BOEM, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and USFWS North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative
 - b. Products developed by NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, including modeling and mapping bird distributions along the Atlantic Coast
 - c. NOAA Cetacean Mapping Working Group (CetMap)
 - d. NOAA NEFSC Ecosystem Assessment Program's Spatial Tools for ecosystem based management and other modeling projects (including collaborations with TNC)
 - e. Rhode Island and Massachusetts marine mammal and avian surveys and other ocean planning –related products
 - f. NERACOOS products
9. Partners in the academic and conservation science community (e.g., Ocean Biogeographic Information System Spatial Ecological Analysis of Megavertebrate Populations (OBIS-SEAMAP), TNC, etc.)

(Objective 1 continued)

10. Potentially leverage BOEM offshore wind vulnerability studies, Massachusetts and Rhode Island efforts to assess ecological value, consider development of an Ocean Health Index, assessment of cumulative impacts, ecosystem services models (University of Rhode Island, Boston University/University of California Santa Barbara/SeaPlan, Natural Capital Project), and others.
11. To support commercial and recreational fishing mapping, contractor assistance, agency in-kind through participation in internal work group, and staff to manage projects and coordinate with data portal.
12. To support recreational activity mapping, contractor assistance, agency in-kind through participation in internal work groups, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) assistance, staff to manage projects and coordinate with data portal, and potential in-kind from Surfrider Foundation and SeaPlan.
13. To support mapping of maritime commerce, energy, and aquaculture, agency in-kind through participation in internal work group, and staff to manage projects and coordinate with data portal.
14. To support identification of culturally important resources, in-kind through participation in internal work group, tribal engagement coordinator to manage projects, staff to coordinate with data portal, and leveraging existing work such as the Narragansett Tribal-University of Rhode Island mapping of potential paleocultural resources.

Timeline*For tasks related to marine life:-*

- January-February 2014: Issue request for proposal(s) and select contractor(s) for characterizing marine mammals, birds, fish
- March-October 2014: Summarize options for tools/products related to identifying ecologically important areas, assessing vulnerability and/or cumulative impacts, etc.; technical committee input contributes to summary
- March-October 2014: Develop draft marine life products with periodic public and technical committee meetings to review progress
- October 2014: Public workshops to review progress on draft marine life products and discuss options for additional tools/products
- November 2014: NE RPB decision about how to utilize marine life and habitat data and any additional tools/products
- December 2014 – December 2015: Continue to develop marine life-related products, review with public, and NE RPB, and integrate into data portal and baseline assessment

(Objective 1 continued)

For tasks related to characterizing human activities:

- January 2014-January 2015 (possibly longer): Map commercial and recreational fishing activity
- Timeline for recreational activity dependent on partner funding availability; likely schedule is to scope through Summer 2014, then implement in Fall 2014-Winter 2015; finalize products in Winter-Spring 2015
- January-June 2014: Next phase of characterizing/engaging maritime commerce and aquaculture activity
- To be determined: Timing for engaging energy community will be coordinated with BOEM

For tasks related to characterizing cultural resources:

- January-March 2014: Review data portal and identify existing tribal, and federal and state datasets of cultural resources
- March-June 2014: Develop and review maps of cultural resources using existing data
- July-December 2014: Review draft maps with cultural work group and develop options for using maps to identify areas of tribal significance

For tasks related to baseline assessment:

- January-March 2014: Issue request for proposal(s) and select contractor(s) for compiling baseline and economic assessment
- March 2014-June 2014: Develop baseline and economic assessment outline for NE RPB and public review

Objective 2. Identify and Support Existing Non-regulatory Opportunities to Work Toward Conserving, Restoring, and Maintaining Healthy Ecosystems

Notes: Existing non-regulatory programs at the federal, tribal and state level are widespread and address many coastal and ocean health issues. Examples include habitat restorations, certain water quality improvement programs, enhancements to existing infrastructure, assessment of invasive species, etc.

Action 2-1. Identify existing and potential programs that are or would be directly related to conservation, restoration and maintaining healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems at a federal, tribal and state level. Identify opportunities for better coordinating, leveraging and supporting those programs to address priority regional ocean management needs.

Outcome

- Identification of related programs and specific steps taken to leverage these programs to meet regional ocean management needs.

Objective 2 Tasks

1. Inventory state, federal, tribal, and other regional partners' restoration and conservation activities, identify areas where programs relate directly to ocean planning goals, and identify opportunities to coordinate and support these programs.

Products/results

1. Comprehensive inventory of those restoration and conservation activities that relate closely to ocean planning goals and objectives.
2. Opportunities to strengthen ocean/coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation.

Capacity

1. Federal agency staff (led by the US Army Corps of Engineers) lead effort
2. Lead partner (to be determined—could be the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative or other program)
3. Leverage existing federal and state programs

Timeline

- January 2014– June 2015

Objective 3. Produce a Regional Ocean Science Plan that Prioritizes Ocean Science and Data Needs for the Region for the Next Five Years

Action 3-1. Engage agencies, tribes, the scientific community and other stakeholders to prioritize scientific/data needs, in particular focused on management needs and information that will be important for future management decisions. Coordinate with existing efforts that are underway or related, and recognize continuing need for basic data development to fill gaps in data, science, and knowledge, and budget challenges that may enhance gaps in the future. For priority topics, describe desired outcomes and identify potential ways of addressing those issues, including consideration of leveraging/partnering with existing efforts.

Action 3-2. Building on results of projects related to the baseline assessment, identify priority data collection and science gaps for the ocean science plan described below. As part of this action and general engagement efforts, identify if there are priorities that could meet other purposes beyond those of regional ocean planning.

Outcome

- Regional ocean science plan to address the region's ocean priority science and data needs.

Objective 3 Tasks

1. Identify existing science plans and those components that relate most closely to regional ocean planning goals and objectives. Develop a five to ten year regional ocean science plan that identifies gaps and integrates science priorities developed through the ocean planning process with other regional and agency efforts.
2. Consider technical committee review of draft science plan to incorporate scientific input.

Products/Results

1. Five to ten year science plan that prioritizes ocean research and data development

Capacity

1. Staff develops science plan with state and federal agency staff; potential agency lead.
2. Leverage existing science plans at the federal, regional, and state level
3. NOAA NCCOS offered assistance

Timeline

- March 2015-December 2015
- January 2014– June 2015

Goal: Effective Decision-making

Improve management effectiveness, intergovernmental decision making, engagement, collaboration, and integration of best available knowledge. Reflect ever-changing social, environmental, and technological conditions.

Objective 1. Enhance Inter-Agency Coordination

Note: This objective addresses the timing and scheduling of decisions about sustainable uses of ocean space, sharing of information among agencies, and communication among federal agencies and between state and federal agencies and federally-recognized tribes. The intention is to focus on all human uses (consumptive and non-consumptive) and management, protection, and restoration of natural resources. It focuses on existing broad programs (e.g., the National Environmental Policy Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act) and other existing Federal and state siting and regulatory programs related to:

- *Marine energy production (i.e., wind, marine hydrokinetic) and infrastructure (i.e., transmission cables, pipelines)*
- *Offshore aquaculture*
- *Sand extraction for beach nourishment*
- *Potential future uses, such as carbon sequestration*

Identification of these focus areas results from their ripe nature (given experience with certain of these projects in recent years), the potential difficulty in decision-making given this experience, and the opportunity to address some of these difficulties. It is important to remember that the NE RPB must work

within existing regulatory authorities and that coordination and sharing of information pursuant to these authorities includes a review of natural resources and existing human uses. Agencies with non-regulatory roles are incorporated in this effort to ensure appropriate consideration of issues such as national security.

Action 1-1: Review federal statutory requirements for siting energy-related development including electricity generation and transmission, infrastructure such as pipelines, etc., offshore aquaculture, sand extraction for beach nourishment and other potential future uses of ocean space (e.g., carbon sequestration.) Review analogous programs at the state and tribal levels. In addition to development-specific requirements (e.g., wind energy leasing), include broad requirements such as NEPA and the CZMA. Discuss with agencies, tribes, the regulated community and others how regulations are implemented in practice to identify specific, potential means of achieving this objective, focusing on process-related topics and how information and data related to human activities and natural resources are considered. Identify options for meeting this objective for NE RPB consideration.

Action 1-2: Coordinate with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leasing program for offshore wind development. Focus on site assessment and construction-operations plan requirements, use of regional ocean planning data and information, tribal consultation requirements, and other topics.

Action 1-3: Identify opportunities to enhance inter-agency coordination for review of marine energy production, infrastructure, offshore aquaculture and sand extraction for beach nourishment. NEPA and development-specific regulatory programs should be accounted for in this action. Identify concrete steps to overcome obstacles to achieving these opportunities, in part to ensure agency commitments. Convene the regulated community and other interested parties to discuss, and revise opportunities prior to their finalization.

Outcomes

- Strengthened inter-agency coordination and implemented federal/state regulatory efficiencies

Objective 1 Tasks

1. Conduct research on federal and state mandates, and tribal responsibilities, and related agency responsibilities for energy development, offshore aquaculture, sand and gravel mining, and potential future uses (e.g., carbon sequestration).
2. Engage BOEM to determine opportunities for regional ocean planning data or stakeholder engagement to coordinate with offshore wind energy development, including development of Site Assessment Plans and Construction Operation Plans. Opportunities potentially include engaging the fishing community in data requirements associated with site assessment, developing natural resource-based products, and engaging tribes in discussions about consultation efforts and/or identification of cultural resources.

(Objective 1 continued)

3. With contractor assistance, engage federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations, including the regulated community, to understand how agency mandates related to energy development, offshore aquaculture, sand and gravel mining and carbon sequestration are or would be practically be implemented in New England. Determine gaps and areas of overlap and identify opportunities for strengthened coordination and other ways of meeting this objective. At a public workshop, discuss potential options for meeting this objective and prepare written summary of discussion of options.
4. Consider and select options to meet this objective, with input from agencies, the regulated community and other interested parties. Identify specific agency commitments related to implementing options and discussion of NE RPB future role in advancing inter-agency coordination.

Products/Results

1. Documented assessment of applicable federal and state regulatory authorities and programs.
2. Workshop report identifying potential options for achieving Objective 1.
3. Determination and documentation of specific actions to achieve Objective 1.
4. Possibly identify best practices related to leasing activity in the Northeast, specifically regarding data collection and stakeholder engagement and consultation practices that may be germane to additional activities, in collaboration with BOEM.

Capacity

1. Agency in-kind contribution through participation in relevant internal RPB work group, individual agency meetings, participation in public workshop and review of contractor products.
2. NE RPB state co-chair and tribal capacity for BOEM/offshore wind energy-specific discussions.
3. Staff manages contractor, staffs internal work group and agency meetings and reviews products. Roger Williams University Law Fellow conducts research as an in-kind contribution.
4. Leverage existing legislative reviews developed by agencies and industry consultants.
5. Contractor to support agency and non-governmental engagement, workshop and final report.

(Objective 1 continued)

Timeline

- January-April: Initial agency and stakeholder meetings
- February 2014: Contractor selected
- May-June 2014: Workshop to review preliminary options
- October 2014: Final report with options for NE RPB consideration
- November 2014: NE RPB decision on options to implement
- December 2014 and beyond: Obtain agency commitments to implement and determine future NE RPB role

Objective 2. Implement Specific Actions to Enhance Informed Public Input in Decision-making

Note: Some aspects of this objective may be longer-term, depending on timing and availability of resources. It may be achieved after 2015 unless specific capacity is secured.

Action 2-1: Develop and disseminate publically accessible materials describing regulatory programs related to the types of activities listed under objective 1, including opportunities for public comment, steps where data and information can be provided and overall timeline for decisions. Existing resources will provide much of the material for this task.

Action 2-2: Engage interested parties to identify other potential means of meeting this objective. This could include topics such as: enhanced use of on-line/social media; use of existing public meetings, including those of the NE RPB, to provide updates on ocean development projects; demonstrating how public input is/would be incorporated in decision-making; and other ways to meet this objective.

Outcomes

- Enhanced publicly available information and opportunities for public participation regarding ocean development proposals and review processes.
- Greater understanding of and ease of participation in, regulatory processes by the public.

Objective 2 Tasks

1. Develop publicly accessible materials that describe regulatory programs for use by potential applicants, decision makers and interested public. Identify opportunities for public comment, specify data and information requirements, and summarize decision making timelines. Efforts under Objective 1 and/or other existing agency materials may inform final products. Potential approach would be to focus on specifics of one type of development review to provide a detailed example.
2. Work with stakeholders to identify other potential ways/products to achieve this objective.

Products/Results

1. Road map or other materials/graphics that clearly describe the permitting process, including data and public inputs, for energy, aquaculture, and sand and gravel for use by applicants and the public.

Capacity

1. At the January 2014 NE RPB meeting, three RPB members volunteered to lead this effort (NOAA, the US Coast Guard, and the Maine Department of Marine Resources).

Timeline

- January-September 2014: Work with stakeholders to identify potential products for NE RPB consideration
- November 2014: NE RPB decision on options to implement
- November 2014 – Jun 2015: Develop and distribute products

Objective 3. Incorporate Maps and Other Products into Existing Agency Decision-making Processes

Note: Scientifically-sound, stakeholder-reviewed products should be publicly available through the data portal. When considering this objective, it is important to remember that the NE RPB must work within existing regulatory authorities. Uncertainty and variability in data must be identified and described for each data product. Caveats associated with data products may limit their utility; some data may be most helpful in generally identifying issues needing further study and/or stakeholders to engage. Certain products may be applicable for preliminary site assessment or consideration of alternatives.

Action 3-1. Within existing regulatory processes, identify potential uses for/applicability of regional ocean planning products. Convene interested parties (i.e., both government and non-government) to discuss this topic and revise products accordingly. With federal and state agencies, and tribes as appropriate, identify and implement specific measures to ensure commitment to achieve this objective.

Action 3-2. Update the data portal, reflecting the results of Action 3-1. Enhance data portal functionality through better presentation, characterization, and visualization of products.

Action 3-3. Work with appropriate agencies/data owners to increase their responsibility for maintaining/updating data products and the data portal, beginning with illustrations of the utility of products developed for regional ocean planning purposes and recognizing future budget issues.

Outcomes

- Regional ocean planning products and information enable preliminary site assessments, provide a better understanding of existing conditions, and/or otherwise contribute to regulatory efficiencies.
- Stakeholders continue to be directly engaged in developing products for the data portal.
- The data portal and its products are maintained and updated in the long-term.

Objective 3 Tasks

1. Continue to develop and maintain the data portal as a central repository of information to support decision making and to engage stakeholders. This includes the development and maintenance of datasets, the www.northeastoceandata.org web site and the technology to host and serve this information.
2. Implement functionality enhancements to support evolving needs for decision-making and different user communities. Potential enhancements include simple map viewers; 3-D videos/simulations; custom base maps; and simplified presentations of complex habitat, climate or other ecological models. Potential enhancements for GIS/data managers include: functionality to query maps to understand scientific certainty and access underlying data and data footprints; scripts and tools to improve access or processing of large agency databases (e.g., Automatic Identification Systems, Vessel Monitoring Systems). NE RPB decisions will prioritize these enhancements.
3. Identify opportunities for the data portal to support existing regulatory processes (e.g., NEPA, Clean Water Act Section 404 and Rivers and Harbors Act Section 10, Coastal Zone Management Act federal consistency, BOEM leasing, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing). Engage regulators to identify data and technology needs to enhance utility of the data portal and related products.
4. Engage agencies and non-governmental organizations to determine options for long term maintenance of data portal products and technology.

Products/Results

1. Data portal website includes key data products for ocean planning resulting from extensive stakeholder engagement and science integration. Website also serves as a primary tool for engaging stakeholders and making management and regulatory decisions.

(Objective 3 continued)

2. Improved visualization and communication of key datasets to support management, regulatory review and stakeholder engagement. Improved access and capabilities to analyze scientific data for GIS/data managers.
3. Data portal is used by NE RPB agencies to support regulatory decisions, by the regulated community to inform project development and by the public to engage in decision making processes.
4. Long-term responsibilities and funding sources for data portal products and technology are implemented.

Capacity

1. Staff manages a data portal team, data development, technological enhancements to data portal and stakeholder review of data products. The team includes National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center, SeaPlan, The Nature Conservancy, ASA, Northeast Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS), and additional contractors.
2. Direct data portal support from BOEM and NOAA Coastal Service Center through Multi-Purpose Marine Cadastre project.
3. Direct data portal support from SeaPlan and The Nature Conservancy.
4. NE RPB agencies review data priorities and draft products and provide input into overall data portal development and discussions of future responsibilities.
5. NE RPB agencies participate in discussions to identify opportunities for data portal to support existing processes.
6. Substantial leveraging of federal and state agency datasets and technology.
7. Increased federal and state agency participation and responsibilities for development of individual data products and for the data portal itself; leverage climatological datasets maintained by NERACOOS.

Timeline

- Ongoing: Manage and upgrade data portal
- Ongoing through September 2014: Engage agencies and non-governmental organizations to identify potential applications of the data portal in existing regulatory processes
- Ongoing: Initial discussions about data portal components and their potential long term hosts
- November 2014 – December 2015: Implement enhancements considering other decisions made by the NE RPB

Objective 4. Improve Respect for the Customs and Traditions of Indigenous Peoples in Decision-making Processes

Action 4-1. Identify specific means by which tribal consultation could be enhanced in existing decision making processes, including the use of information about resources that are of cultural, historic or spiritual significance to the tribes.

Action 4-2. Involve regional tribes in the submerged paleocultural landscape work of the Narragansett tribe to assess project's potential utility in decision-making.

Outcomes

- Identification of options for enhancing tribal consultations
- Greater regional tribal community participation in paleocultural project of the Narragansett tribe

Objective 4 Tasks

1. Involve tribal coordinator in internal work group, research, and discussions, including those with BOEM, that are aimed at improving inter-agency coordination, public participation and the use of data in existing decision making processes
2. Tribal coordinator convenes tribes to develop options for enhancing tribal input into decision making processes
3. Tribal coordinator convenes annual meetings to consult with the Narragansett Tribe about submerged paleocultural landscape project

Products/Results

1. Options for improving tribal consultation and use of information on areas of tribal importance in existing decision-making processes
2. Identification of goals for upcoming submerged paleocultural landscape research season, including the integration of tribal lore and history in ongoing research

Capacity

1. Tribal coordinator
2. Tribe in-kind involvement in activities convened by the tribal coordinator

Timeline

- January-May 2014: Initial discussions with tribes
- Spring 2014: Annual submerged paleocultural landscape research meeting
- June -October 2014: Options developed for improving tribal consultation
- November 2014: NE RPB decides on options to implement
- Spring 2015: Annual submerged paleocultural landscape research meeting

Objective 5. Improve coordination with local communities in decision-making processes

Action 5-1. Identify best practices for early community engagement in existing decision making processes.

Outcomes:

- Identification of options for incorporating local/community knowledge in existing decision-making processes.
- Increased understanding of cultural and community values.

Goal: Compatibility Among Past, Current and Future Ocean Uses

Develop a planning framework to encourage compatibility among past, current and future uses of ocean and coastal waters while minimizing user conflict and impacts to environmental and cultural resources. Recognize local priorities and the connection of ocean uses and the ecosystem to shoreside infrastructure and activities. Facilitate increased understanding and coordination among stakeholders, recognizing the difficulty of resolving certain conflicts.

Objective 1. Increase Understanding of Past, Current and Future Interactions Among Ocean Uses and the Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem

Note: Addressing project-specific compatibility issues generally is the domain of specific project-review processes and thus is appropriately addressed during permitting. Regional ocean planning can add value by enhancing understanding of trends in human activities, to the extent foreseeable, by assessing interactions between and among human activities and the ecosystem, and by ensuring that specific projects underway incorporate considerations resulting from engagement of stakeholders in the Northeast. This approach envisions drawing upon the results of work conducted as part of the Healthy Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems Goal, including the baseline assessment, continued characterization of human uses of the ocean, economic assessment, and continued characterization of natural resources.

Action 1-1. Examine technological, management, economic, cultural, environmental, or other factors to enhance understanding of reasonably foreseeable changes in human uses and ecosystems. Engage industry representatives and experts in maritime commerce, recreation, commercial fishing, marine energy development, marine infrastructure (including submarine cables), and offshore aquaculture to determine potential future scenarios or trends, if possible, building upon historic trends as appropriate. Gauge potential for relatively new uses including offshore aquaculture and extraction of sand and gravel for beach nourishment. Results of this work will be reviewed and discussed with the public.

Action 1-2. Use the results of Action 1-1 to assess the utility of human activity maps using retrospective data. Identify the need, timing, and other considerations for periodic updates to such maps.

Outcomes

- Identification of potential future changes to human activity maps and other products.
- Information describing potential future uses of ocean space, the viability of existing human activity maps and need for updates.

Objective 1 Tasks

1. Based on baseline assessment, public engagement, and NE RPB decisions about planning priorities, determine whether and how to develop information (e.g., trends or scenarios related to existing uses) related to future ocean activities. In collaboration with existing efforts, engage the aquaculture community to identify trends and, if possible, develop potential future activities in response to technological, economic, and environmental factors.
2. In collaboration with BOEM-led Northeast Sand Management Working Group and other relevant federal/state efforts, develop potential future scenarios for the use of offshore sand and gravel resources for beach nourishment and coastal protection (including identifying potential sand borrow areas).
3. In collaboration with BOEM, DOE, ISO New England, and other relevant agencies and efforts, develop potential future energy scenarios that integrate BOEM's offshore wind energy siting, DOE funded demonstration projects, and other utility-scale or research projects. Consider regional transmission needs in future scenarios.
4. In collaboration with existing efforts at DOT/MARAD and USCG, engage the maritime commerce community to identify trends and, if possible, develop future spatial scenarios due to technological and economic factors, including Panama Canal expansion, America's Marine Highways, and increased offshore energy development.
5. In collaboration with NMFS, NEFMC, and state fishery management agencies, summarize management and environmental factors that might affect maps of commercial fishing activity.
6. Consider potential future scenarios for other ocean uses, such as recreation, telecommunications, and dredging and disposal in collaboration with relevant agencies and industry partners.
7. NE RPB determines how information from these tasks could be integrated across uses and/or used in regional planning and/or to support existing management activities.

Products/Results

1. To be determined by the NE RPB as informed by discussions with stakeholders

(Objective 1 continued)

Capacity

1. Staff manages contractors
2. Contractor support via public engagement and baseline assessment contracts. Potential additional use of existing funds to develop additional products as warranted by future discussion and NE RPB decision.
3. NE RPB agency in-kind
4. Build on existing efforts and studies (Marine Highways-related efforts, Atlantic Coast-Port Access Route Study as appropriate, others)

Timeline

- January-October 2014: Engagement of stakeholders to determine feasibility and utility of developing future scenarios
- November 2014: RPB decides whether/how to pursue future scenario/trends development
- December 2014-June 2015: Develop future scenarios integrating existing industry-specific plans, as appropriate
- July-December 2015: NE RPB determine how to utilize future scenarios

Objective 2. Ensure Regional Issues are Incorporated in Ongoing Efforts to Assess New and Existing Human Activities

Note: Several ongoing projects are looking at potential interactions between various human activities. Many of these projects relate to ongoing offshore wind energy development. Aspects of these projects may benefit from a regional perspective, recognizing that it will be important to understand their scope, timing, and intended purpose to help identify opportunities to contribute to such work.

Action 2-1. Summarize status of projects including but not limited to the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study, BOEM-led Northeast Sand Management Working Group, regional efforts to assess commercial and recreational fishing and offshore wind energy development, the identification of potential paleocultural resources offshore Rhode Island, and efforts that are underway to assess interactions between human activities.

Action 2-2. Using the assessment in Action 2-1, identify considerations for these existing efforts and work with sponsoring entities/agencies to do so. Identify need to facilitate discussions between diverse users and agencies and undertake such discussions where appropriate.

Action 2-3. Convene stakeholders and experts to facilitate information sharing on the status of transmission planning in the Northeast and related activities (e.g., grid connections, geographic needs/desirability, etc.). The purpose of this action will be to enhance understanding of the transmission planning and where transmission activities might interface with the other regional ocean planning goals and objectives.

Outcomes

- Regional perspectives incorporated in ongoing projects such as those identified above
- Public discussion of regional issues associated with offshore wind siting such as transmission

Objective 2 tasks

1. Based on results of public and sector engagement, and NE RPB decisions; agency representatives ensure regional feedback informs existing agency efforts to characterize ocean activities.
2. Convene workshop and/or other suitable public forums to discuss regional electricity transmission-related issues.

Products/Results

1. Existing programs ensure consistency with regional needs
2. Written summary of regional transmission-related issues
3. Public and NE RPB discussion of regional issues associated with offshore wind siting such as transmission

Capacity

1. Federal and state agency staff coordinate with existing efforts such as those being led by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center
2. Contractor support via public engagement contract

Timeline

- January 2014-December 2015

Overarching Objective (Applies to All Goals): Periodically Assess Progress Toward Achieving Regional Ocean Planning Goals

Action 3-1: Develop and implement decision-tracking mechanisms to identify if objectives under three goals are being met. Include input from stakeholders and interested parties. This action will result in longer-term (beyond two years) needs being identified and necessary steps implemented to meet those needs.

Outcomes

- Identification of progress toward achieving this goal and implementation of revised measures as necessary.