

# Maritime Commerce in New England

## A Project of the Northeast Regional Planning Body



### **M**aritime commerce has helped define the historical, cultural, and economic development of New England for hundreds of years.

Today, the waters of the northeastern United States accommodate some 4,000 transits of commercial ships and 8,000 transits of cargo barges each year. Maritime commerce—including shipping, port infrastructure, and recreational cruises—is vital to the heritage and future of our coastal communities. It is also a highly competitive industry, with many companies operating right at the profit margin to attract and maintain clients.

The Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) was established under the National Ocean Policy to develop an ocean plan for New England waters. Guided by its *Framework for Ocean Planning in the Northeast*, the RPB is collecting and developing data and tools to analyze the implications of ocean use decisions for the maritime commerce industry.

### **Project Goals**

The overall goal of this project is to gain a better understanding of maritime commerce—the issues the industry is facing as it seeks to maximize efficiency in a competitive market. To achieve this goal and reduce the potential for future conflicts, the RPB is developing spatial data and other information to characterize current industry use of coastal and marine waters, the economic impacts of maritime commerce in the region, and future trends. Key issues include the need for deeper navigation channels to accommodate larger ships, increased commercial traffic from energy development, and growth of the cruise ship industry in New England.



A key part of ocean planning in New England is better understanding the issues facing the maritime commerce industry to help ensure its competitiveness and efficiency.

### **Maritime Industry Participation**

In November and December 2012, members of the maritime commerce sector were invited to a series of five working sessions to review initial data products and comment on the state of maritime commerce in New England. A total of 49 participants attended working sessions in New Haven, Connecticut; Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Maine; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and North Kingstown, Rhode Island. Participants reviewed a summary of these working sessions, which was published in early 2013 and is available online at [neoceanning.org/projects/maritime-commerce](http://neoceanning.org/projects/maritime-commerce). Since that time, ocean planning staff have provided regular updates at meetings (such as Port Operators Group and Harbor Safety Committee gatherings) and conferences (such as the North Atlantic Ports Association and American Waterways Operators meetings).



## For more information

To learn more about this and other ocean planning activities in New England, go to [neoplan.org](http://neoplan.org), scan the QR code below, or contact John Weber ([jweber@northeastoceancouncil.org](mailto:jweber@northeastoceancouncil.org)) or Nick Napoli ([nnapoli@northeastoceancouncil.org](mailto:nnapoli@northeastoceancouncil.org)).

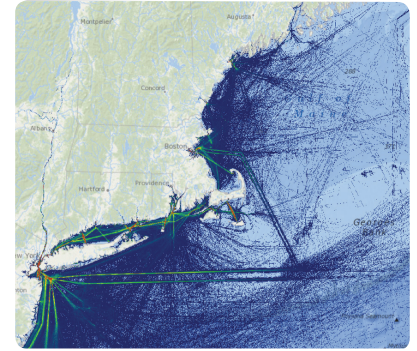


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## Data Sources

This project largely relies on industry-reviewed maps that use Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) data and NOAA nautical charts, augmented by input from industry experts. These maps show critical navigation and operational areas, hazards that could affect maritime operations, and commercial vessel traffic.

Industry participants identified additional data to include on maps, such as pilot boarding areas, traditional anchorage grounds, hazardous areas, and unofficial routes preferred during bad weather. They also provided guidance on further analysis of AIS data to understand patterns associated with different types of marine commerce (for example, differentiating tug and tow traffic from tanker traffic). The maps at the Northeast Ocean Data Portal ([www.northeastoceandata.org](http://www.northeastoceandata.org)) incorporate the results of these discussions. Industry experts also suggested using data on the economic implications of shifts in commercial vessel traffic and cargo flows, as well as models of regional transportation across the marine/land boundary.



Map of commercial vessel traffic on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal ([www.northeastoceandata.org](http://www.northeastoceandata.org)). All maps are developed through a scientific process that incorporates input from industry and government officials.

## Project Team

During the first phase of this project, ocean planning staff worked with a team from the Marine Policy Center at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. This team collaborated with the U.S. Coast Guard and representatives from several industry sectors, including shipping, recreational cruises, and ports.

## Accomplishments Through Spring 2014

Initial steps have focused on understanding the current state of maritime commerce in the region. Drawing on summaries of the five 2012 working sessions and other existing information, a maritime commerce expert prepared a white paper on the state of the maritime commerce in the region. The white paper and session summaries are available online at [neoplan.org/projects/maritime-commerce](http://neoplan.org/projects/maritime-commerce). Data products on vessel traffic, using the data sources described above, are available at [www.northeastoceandata.org](http://www.northeastoceandata.org).

## Next Steps

- Ocean planning staff are developing new data products, including maps of traffic patterns by vessel type and cargo using AIS, pilot boarding areas, safety and security zones, and traditionally used anchorages.
- Relevant agencies and industry representatives will be asked to review these and other interim information products and to consider industry issues in the broader context of ocean planning. This may include a focused discussion of anticipated changes in the industry.