



**CONNECTICUT
ORNITHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**

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July 22, 2016

Ms. Betsy Nicholson
Federal Co-Lead
Northeast Regional Planning Body
NOAA and NMFS
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Mr. Grover Fugate
State Co-Lead
Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council
4808 Tower Hill Road
Wakefield, RI 02879-1900

Mr. Richard Getchell
Tribal Co-Lead
Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians
7 Northern Rd
Presque Isle, ME 04769-2027

Submitted Electronically via E-Mail, to comment@neoceanplanning.org

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT NORTHEAST OCEAN PLAN

<http://neoceanplanning.org/plan/>

Dear Ms. Nicholson, Mr. Fugate, and Mr. Getchell:

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Northeast Ocean Plan. We, the Connecticut Ornithological Association, also known as the COA, are writing in strong support of the Ocean Plan and its implementation, including annual follow-up workshops.

COA would like to express its full support for the excellent work and results delivered by the remarkable Northeast Ocean Planning team. Here are some of the accomplishments we would like to commend:

- * Creating, inspiring and leading the large team of cooperative individuals and organizations, including all or most major marine stakeholders in the Northeast USA.
- * Getting early agreement on six fundamentally important Plan priorities, inspired by the goal of improving ocean health, to guide all the rest of the work.
- * Documenting the Baseline Assessment dataset, giving us a snapshot which we can use for comparisons in future years.
- * Creating and maintaining a one-stop Northeast Ocean “data portal” to provide the New England coasts' planners, developers, permit and license reviewers and other stakeholders with easy access to well organized, regularly updated, peer reviewed biogeophysical data about every part of their jurisdictional waters – from shore to far offshore.
- * Outlining guidance for relevant federal agencies staff to both (a) supply and update high quality information to the Portal, and (b) access the Portal as part of their various licensing and oversight roles, to fill data needs.
- * Designing light-weight Best Practices and other ways of optimizing reasonable compromises and tradeoffs in competing and complementary uses of marine areas, helping to maximize the upsides of regulation while minimizing its downsides.

Thank you for your outstanding work to find simple and effective ways to optimize and balance both the health of the ocean and the many human uses of it.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Van Der Aue, President
Connecticut Ornithological Association

Steve Broker, Vice President
Connecticut Ornithological Association

Patrick M. Comins, Chair
COA Conservation Committee

Thomas J. Robben, Chair
COA Research Committee