

Businesses, Scientists and Conservationists Working Together for A Thriving Ocean Future

Stakeholders across New England recently began working together to support Regional Ocean Planning.

The result of this effort is the creation of the New England Ocean Action Network (NEOAN) www.newenglandoceanaction.org.

NEOAN recognizes that a comprehensive, science based and participatory ocean planning process is necessary to accommodate a growing range of ocean uses, and to grow our economy while protecting and restoring the health of our ocean ecosystems. Such a planning process could promote sustainable economic development, improve stewardship of our ocean and coasts, and help government be more effective at solving management problems. NEOAN comprises individuals and organizations from the region's environmental community, educational and research institutions, shipping and ports, fishing industry, clean energy field, and other ocean users.



When it comes to important decisions affecting our oceans, we need to base each decision on science and find a way to give everyone a voice. Regional Ocean Planning is a process that brings together all our ocean stakeholders – from fishermen to whale watchers, from beachgoers to renewable energy developers – to help us figure out how to share the ocean sustainably and maintain the benefits these resources provide for us all.

The Challenges

Ocean resources are currently managed by more than 20 federal agencies and administered through a web of more than 140 different and often conflicting laws and regulations. This results in such problems as:

- Poor communication and coordination about ocean use decisions
- Slow, reactive management – management decisions that drag on unnecessarily and delay or prevent good projects from moving forward.
- Exclusion from the process – not all ocean users feel like they have a say in decisions
- Difficulty sharing data – it's hard to make sound decisions without having all the facts in one place

The Solutions

Based on decades of studies and existing efforts, the Obama Administration established the National Ocean Policy, which is an important framework that requires all federal agencies to work with state agencies, tribes and ocean user groups to improve the management of our oceans and coasts. The National Ocean Policy promotes the use of better scientific, economic, and cultural information and data in order to inform decisions and involve all ocean and coastal users.

Regional Ocean Planning, technically known as coastal and marine spatial planning, is one of nine objectives of the National Ocean Policy. Regional Ocean Planning is a science based process of improving decisions about ocean resources before conflict arises – by involving everyone who has a stake in those resources, including

