



OCEAN PLANNING IN THE NORTHEAST

What is Ocean Planning?

Ocean Planning is a tool for people and government to cooperatively solve problems. Rather than creating a new set of laws, ocean planning provides information and cross-sector engagement that can help identify and resolve potential conflicts early, helping decision makers in the private and public sectors to do their jobs better.

The Northeast Ocean Plan

New England recently finalized the nation's first ocean plan with the goal of better, more efficient decisions driven by the best economic and ecological data available. Numerous stakeholders, including New England states, tribes, federal agencies, industry, and the New England Fishery Management Council, were engaged in jointly developing and are now implementing the state and regional priorities outlined in the Northeast Ocean Plan to improve the future of the region's economy.

What Does the Ocean Plan Do?

- **Enhances Ocean Stakeholder Engagement** by collecting and including stakeholder-driven information, providing a forum for input from all ocean users, and creating a clear pathway for interested stakeholders to participate in ocean management.
- **Provides an Innovative Data Platform** called the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, a web-based mapping tool available to the public, local communities, and decision-makers that helps inform smarter and more efficient management decisions. Highlights of the Data Portal include:
 - **New and Innovative Data on Ocean Industries** so the ocean economy is reflected in the decision-making process. The ocean plan outlines challenges facing industries and the planning process enables synthesis of maps displaying current ocean industry uses, like commercial fisheries and shipping routes and identifies future industry use trends.
 - **Cutting-edge Ecological Data** that helps decision-makers and ocean users effectively balance and mitigate potential ecological risk by synthesizing complex research into maps describing populations of marine fish, sea turtles, whales, and seabirds and their important habitats.
- **Facilitates Early Government Coordination** by providing for the tools and the discussion forum federal and state agency decision makers need to make more informed management decisions. Specific coordination efforts between the New England states, federal agencies, tribes, and the Fishery Management Council include:
 - **Improving the permitting process** for emerging uses such as aquaculture, sand mining, and offshore wind development through commitments to coordinate early. This coordination will help to avoid permitting impediments, such as conflicts among ocean users or late agencies objections.
 - **Establishing common data sources** that are agreed upon and utilized to inform decision-making.
 - **Identifying best practices** to improve communication with ocean users such as fishermen, tribes, and port operators to better inform the public of potential development conflicts before a proposed project is underway.