Help Protect Maryland’s Ocean for the Future

Home to a rich variety of fish and wildlife—from blue crabs, oysters and striped bass to bald eagles and dolphins—Maryland’s iconic Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Ocean and the Atlantic-facing coastal bays are a beautiful place for families to visit, swim and fish. They are also an economic powerhouse, contributing nearly $6.5 billion to the state’s gross domestic product and over 86,000 jobs.¹

But Maryland’s ocean faces growing challenges, from pollution to loss of habitat and sometimes competing industrial uses. The offshore waters serve as migratory corridors for much ocean life, including endangered North Atlantic right whales, sea turtles and many fish species, yet they are an increasingly busy place:

- Offshore wind development is being proposed off Maryland and throughout the Mid-Atlantic;
- More shipping traffic and larger ships will result from the Panama Canal expansion currently underway and may result from proposed liquid natural gas terminals (if they are built); and
- Sea level rise and stronger, bigger storms will continue to change the shape of our shoreline and create demand for mining offshore sand deposits that are valuable for fisheries.

Dozens of different agencies have overlapping and sometimes conflicting responsibilities for addressing ocean development, and historically there has been a lack of coordination. That is now changing: The Mid-Atlantic states of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey have come together with federal agency representatives to work together more efficiently and to proactively plan for sustainable use and protection of the ocean waters off Maryland and the other Mid-Atlantic states.

Those of us who use and love the ocean—fishermen, environmental organizations, shipping companies, coastal tourism businesses and members of the public—need to encourage this coordinated ocean planning and help identify areas of the sea that are appropriate for different uses and those that need protection. This cooperation will help us ensure a healthy ocean for our children, grandchildren and generations to come.

HELP PROTECT MARYLAND’S OCEAN

A series of listening sessions are being held throughout the Mid-Atlantic region to solicit your input on what a coordinated ocean plan should look like.

Attend one of the Annapolis listening sessions on February 24 at 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. or at 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Marriott Waterfront at 80 Compromise Street, and ask for an ocean plan that protects, maintains and restores the health of our Mid-Atlantic ocean habitat and wildlife and preserves the jobs, food and recreation that depend on these resources. For more information, visit www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/. You can also email comments to MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov until April 15.

Ocean Blueprint and Sharing Our Seas are two short NRDC films about coordinated ocean planning. To view these films and find out how you can help, visit www.nrdc.org/oceanblueprint.


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