

OCEAN FACTS



Healthy Oceans Need Smart Planning

We demand a lot from our oceans—from fishing and tourism, to shipping and energy development. These human uses and the environmental needs of the sea have been governed haphazardly—overseen by more than 140 laws and 20 agencies, each with different goals and often conflicting mandates. But our oceans and coasts are stressed from problems like pollution, depleted fish populations, dying coral, endangered species, warmer temperatures and ocean acidification. If not carried out wisely, growing industrial use of these waters will lead to “ocean sprawl,” further threatening the health of our valuable marine resources and jeopardizing the food, jobs and

recreation our oceans provide. By planning ahead for our human needs from the sea we can reduce conflicts and keep ocean waters and life healthy.

We can do this through a common sense process called coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) that optimizes how we use our oceans and makes management more effective and efficient. It does this by identifying areas in the sea that are appropriate for industrial use and areas where ocean habitat and wildlife need protection. This kind of smart, comprehensive ocean planning is the best way to ensure healthy oceans for the future.



For more
information,
please
contact:

Alison Chase
achase@nrdc.org
(212) 727-4551

 switchboard.nrdc.org/
blogs/achase

www.nrdc.org/policy
www.facebook.com/nrdc.org
www.twitter.com/nrdc

OUR OCEANS AND COASTS ARE ECONOMIC ENGINES

Healthy oceans and coasts are a vital part of a healthy U.S. economy. The area of ocean controlled by the United States is greater than the country's total land mass, and in 2009 our more than \$222 billion ocean economy contributed more economic output than the entire farm sector.¹ A significant amount of this economic strength comes from recreation, tourism, and fishing, which depend on clean beaches, clean water, and abundant fish and wildlife. Protecting our oceans and coasts means protecting the economy and jobs.

THE NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY CALLS FOR SMARTER PLANNING

In July 2010, after a year-long public outreach process with stakeholders from commercial and recreational fishing, shipping and ports, energy developers, conservationists, scientists, and other ocean users, President Obama issued an executive order establishing the nation's first-ever National Ocean Policy to protect, maintain, and restore our ocean resources.² The policy calls on all federal agencies that play a role in ocean activities to work together and with coastal states and tribes to develop regional blueprints, also known as coastal and marine spatial plans, to guide ocean development and protection.

"Better plans lead to road maps that can guide current and future users of the oceans about how to best achieve their business plans ... these types of planning and data collection will help industry by providing us with more certainty about the rules of the road. Certainty leads to the avoidance of conflicts, improves efficiencies and minimizes competing uses."

– Jim Lanard, President, Offshore Wind Development Coalition³

This planning process provides opportunities for those who love and use the ocean to have input throughout the decision-making process and to reach a common understanding of the goals for managing an area. This comprehensive approach is a smart way to prevent uncoordinated, haphazard development of the ocean, protect ocean wildlife and habitats, provide clean ocean waters for our beaches, and at the same time provide greater certainty for coastal and ocean businesses. Done right, it will protect our oceans and the jobs they support.

"[The National Ocean Policy] is an important departure from past practice, where certain viewpoints were not represented during the review of a specific project until late in a specific project review process. This ultimately leads to project delays, lawsuits, and general frustration with the process—from all standpoints."

– John Bullard, President, Sea Education Association, Woods Hole, MA, Former Mayor of New Bedford, Member of the Massachusetts Ocean Advisory Commission⁴

This effort is particularly important as companies look to build new wind and other renewable energy projects off our coasts. With smart ocean planning we can not only get these clean, homegrown energy sources up and running faster, we can ensure they are located in the right places with minimal impacts to ecosystems and wildlife.

A handful of states have started doing this type of smart planning and are already reaping the rewards. The national ocean policy will encourage more states and regions to engage in this type of planning and build on these successes.

STEPS TOWARD IMPROVED OCEAN MANAGEMENT

Comprehensive ocean planning will help protect our oceans into the future. NRDC is working to ensure that this type of planning moves forward so we all enjoy healthier oceans and the benefits they provide. You can play an important role by encouraging funding for this effort and that your state and regional leaders move forward with smart ocean planning to protect important and unique marine systems, wildlife habitats and the many economic activities that depend on healthy oceans.

LEARN MORE!

Ocean Blueprint is a short NRDC film about protecting ocean ecosystem health. To view the film, and find out how you can help, visit <http://www.nrdc.org/oceanblueprint>.

You can find out more about the National Ocean Policy at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans>.

Endnotes

1 U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (2004). *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century*. Final Report. Washington, DC. (pp. 30-31). Available at: <http://oceancommission.gov>; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) Data 2009. Available at <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/enow>; U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. Gross-Domestic-Product-(GDP)-by-Industry Data. Available at: http://www.bea.gov/industry/gdpbyind_data.htm.

2 Executive Order 13547. 19 July 2010. Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/2010stewardship-eo.pdf>.

3 Lanard, Jim. Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources Oversight Hearing on the President's New National Ocean Policy. 4 Oct. 2011.

4 Bullard, John. Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources Oversight Hearing on the President's New National Ocean Policy. 4 Oct. 2011.