



HELP PROTECT OUR ATLANTIC OCEAN AND COAST

Home to a rich variety of fish and wildlife—from blue crabs and summer flounder to dolphins and endangered whales—the Mid-Atlantic’s ocean and bays are beautiful places for families to visit, swim, and fish.



Our region’s ocean is also an economic powerhouse, contributing more than \$48 billion to the region’s gross domestic product (GDP) and nearly 700,000 jobs.¹ But our ocean faces growing challenges, including pollution, loss of habitat, and sometimes competing industrial uses. The offshore waters serve as migratory corridors and a home for ocean life, including endangered North Atlantic right whales, sea turtles, and many fish species. But they are increasingly busy.

- Offshore wind development is being proposed throughout the Mid-Atlantic.
- Our ports are making way for colossal ships following the Panama Canal expansion, which may increase shipping traffic.
- Sea level rise and stronger, bigger storms are reshaping our shores and creating demand for beach restoration and mining of offshore sand deposits that are valuable habitat for fisheries.

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Quick Report Tool for Socioeconomic Data, *available at:* <https://coast.noaa.gov/quickreport/#/index.html>.



Dozens of different agencies have overlapping and sometimes conflicting responsibilities for addressing ocean development. Historically, coordination has been lacking, resulting in an often confusing patchwork approach to ocean use and conservation. That is now changing.

The Mid-Atlantic states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, together with regional fisheries managers, tribes, federal agencies—and taking into account extensive stakeholder and public input—have developed the first-ever draft plan to guide ocean development. **The draft *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan* is out for public comment this summer. Make sure your voice is heard!**

SPEAK UP FOR OUR OCEAN

The draft *Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan* seeks to strengthen interagency coordination and public participation in offshore decisions. Yet, though we are moving in the right direction, there is work to do in order for the plan to ensure a healthy ocean today and in the future. It's critical that the final plan include:

- **A short, definitive deadline**—ideally by the end of 2016—for identifying areas critical for the long-term health of the region's marine life. Knowing the location of ecologically important areas helps managers, business, and other stakeholders make better development decisions.

- **Agency commitments to conserve these ecologically important areas and identified areas of high biodiversity** where more than 50 percent of the region's fish, birds, corals, and marine mammals can be found over the course of a year. Protecting our ecologically and economically valuable ocean life should be a best practice.
- **Agency commitments to identify a set of objectives and indicators for ocean health** to regularly evaluate whether the plan is achieving the goal of a healthy ocean and to inform decisions.

Open house public listening sessions are being held throughout the Mid-Atlantic region to solicit input on this groundbreaking coordinated ocean plan. Please attend a meeting to ask for an ocean plan that conserves the health of our Mid-Atlantic ocean's habitat and wildlife—and the jobs, food, and recreational opportunities that depend on these resources. All of us who use and love the ocean need to encourage coordinated ocean planning and the identification and conservation of important ecological areas. This proactive planning for sustainable use and protection of the region's ocean will help us ensure a healthy ocean for generations to come.

For more information, visit <http://www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body> or <http://midatlanticocean.org/youroceanplan>. You can also email comments to MidAtlanticRPB@boem.gov.

