

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL ON THE OCEAN

WORK PLAN FOR 2022 - 2024



ABOUT MARCO

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) was established in 2009 by the governors of the five Mid-Atlantic coastal states: Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York. MARCO is the recognized Regional Ocean Partnership in the Mid-Atlantic, and is led by a Management Board that comprises coastal managers or other state agency leadership from each of the five states.



SHARED PRIORITIES

Marine Habitats. MARCO works to ensure the protection of marine habitats, including sensitive and unique offshore ecosystems such as deep-water corals and canyons. Learn more about how MARCO is advancing this priority on the [Marine Habitats web page](#).

Renewable Offshore Energy. Many of the Mid-Atlantic states have set ambitious renewable energy goals, which may be met in large part through offshore wind development. MARCO is working to understand and plan for the impacts of this burgeoning industry on the region's ecosystems, economy, and infrastructure. Learn more about how MARCO is advancing this priority on the [Renewable Offshore Energy web page](#).

Climate Change. Coastal and ocean communities and economies are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. There is increasing urgency to foster ocean and coastal resilience and better understand the ocean's role in mitigation. Learn more about how MARCO is advancing this priority on the [Climate Change web page](#).

Water Quality. Improve the region's coastal and ocean water quality through actions that prevent or reduce marine debris and address coastal and ocean acidification. Learn more about how MARCO is advancing this priority on the [Water Quality web page](#).

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Regional Blue Economy. MARCO seeks to conduct actions that create a more sustainable and inclusive blue economy, with healthy ocean ecosystems as a foundation, in the Mid-Atlantic, particularly given ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. MARCO recognizes the need to engage a broader diversity of people and partners in ocean and coastal issues, and to create a deeper sense of our shared ocean culture and identity among residents of the region.

MARCO MANAGEMENT BOARD

MARCO is run by a Board of members comprised by coastal managers and other state agency leadership from each of the five states. The Board has a chair that rotates from state to state on a two year basis.

DELAWARE

Kimberly Cole (Chair)

Delaware Coastal Programs

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

MARYLAND

Catherine McCall

Chesapeake and Coastal Services

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

NEW JERSEY

Kevin Hassell

New Jersey Coastal Management Program

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

NEW YORK

Kisha Santiago-Martinez

New York Ocean and Lake Program

New York Department of State

VIRGINIA

Laura McKay

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality





GOALS

1. Identify and foster new partnerships.
2. Convene across agencies, entities and sectors around aforementioned priorities.
3. Understand wildlife research needs, transmission planning and data collection opportunities as they relate to responsible offshore wind development.
4. Continue to share regional coastal- and ocean-data across a diverse array of interests.
5. Create a shared understanding about what investments are needed to support the region's priorities.

STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Facilitate inter-agency coordination through the Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean.

Strategy 2: Develop and maintain peer-reviewed geospatial data products on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.

Strategy 3: Establish, maintain, and participate in collaborative working groups and ad hoc convenings.

Strategy 4: Host and foster the Regional Wildlife Science Entity.

Strategy 5: Build a shared understanding of the Regional Blue Economy and how to sustain it.

Strategy 6: Communicate and engage with stakeholders.

Strategy 7: Regularly convene the Management Board and invite partners for topic-specific discussion.

STRATEGY 1: FACILITATE INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION THROUGH THE MID-ATLANTIC COMMITTEE ON THE OCEAN.

MACO is a committee established by MARCO to foster collaboration among states, federal agencies, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and federally recognized tribes, and to engage stakeholders. The purpose of MACO is to enhance the vitality of the region's ocean ecosystem and economy through increased communication and collaboration.

STRATEGY 2: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN PEER-REVIEWED GEOSPATIAL DATA PRODUCTS ON THE MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN DATA PORTAL.

MARCO's Portal is a publicly available, interactive data visualization tool that provides users access to thousands of spatial data layers for fishing grounds, marine life habitat, a vast range of human uses, oceanographic information, and more. Through the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, MARCO has brought together an unprecedented collection of data layers about the living and nonliving features of our Mid-Atlantic Ocean. When combined, these data tell the story of the ecological importance of specific areas of our ocean that, when overlaid with other data layers on ocean use and management, support more conservation-minded decision making about a range of activities.



STRATEGY 3: ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN, AND PARTICIPATE IN WORKING GROUPS, AD HOC CONVENINGS, AND SPECIAL PROJECTS.

MARCO will continue to maintain and establish collaborative working groups and ad hoc convenings on a range of specific ocean topics of regional importance. Through these forums, governmental and nongovernmental actors collaboratively identify challenges and potential solutions for decision makers to address, bring heightened focus across the region to important emerging ocean and coastal issues, offer opportunities for stakeholder engagement and data interpretation on key regulatory and non-regulatory issues in a non-confrontational setting, and disseminate information about ocean issues to the Mid-Atlantic public.

STRATEGY 4: HOST AND FOSTER THE REGIONAL WILDLIFE SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE FOR OFFSHORE WIND.

The RWSC is a multi-sector group that supports research and monitoring on wildlife and offshore wind on the US Atlantic Coast. MARCO, in partnership with the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) and the Coastal States Stewardship Foundation (CSSF) provide staff and administration functions for the RWSC. The four sectors that comprise RWSC (federal agencies, state agencies, eNGOs, offshore wind industry) overlap with regional ocean planning participants in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Therefore, RWSC benefits from involvement of participants and staff in synergistic ocean planning activities described in other Strategies of this work plan. The RWSC Work Plan outlines the broad bins of responsibilities shared between MARCO, NROC, and CSSF in launching and implementing the RWSC. There are six broad ongoing tasks. More specific actions that will be required within each of these tasks are projected each year. To learn more about the RWSC's and its work plan visit the RWSC website <https://neoceanplanning.org/rwse/>.

STRATEGY 5: BUILD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE REGIONAL BLUE ECONOMY.

MARCO seeks to understand and pursue actions that strengthen the Mid-Atlantic region's blue economy in order to (1) encourage greater public and private investment in blue economy activities in the region, (2) stimulate improvements to policy making at all levels of government that allow the region to better tap the economic and environmental benefits of a sustainable blue economy approach, and (3) engage new interests whose voices have been underrepresented in ocean and coastal decision making.

STRATEGY 6: COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS.

MARCO engages stakeholders around the states' shared priorities, work group progress, and relevant updates on ocean issues in the region. to provide access to information and engagement on ocean issues in the region.

STRATEGY 7: REGULARLY CONVENE THE MANAGEMENT BOARD AND INCLUDE PARTNERS FOR TOPIC-SPECIFIC DISCUSSION.

The MARCO Management Board members meet monthly to discuss ocean-related issues and activities in each state, identify areas of overlapping priorities, make decisions on deliverables or other actions, discuss partnership and funding opportunities, etc. The Management Board Chair leads the agenda development, with support from MARCO staff, and also facilitates the meetings.

MID-ATLANTIC COMMITTEE ON THE OCEAN (MACO)

STEERING COMMITTEE

MACO is a committee established by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), the Mid-Atlantic regional ocean partnership (ROP), to foster collaboration among states, federal agencies, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and federally recognized tribes and with stakeholders.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Kimberly Cole

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Kevin Hassell

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Mike Snyder (Chair)

New York Department of State

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Wright Frank

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Roselle (Henn) Stern

Army Corps of Engineers

Tricia Hooper

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Jessica Coakley

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES

Dr. Kelsey Leonard

Shinnecock Indian Nation

ABOUT MACO

[The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean](#)

(MACO) is a committee established by MARCO to foster collaboration among states, federal agencies, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and federally recognized tribes, and to engage stakeholders. The purpose of MACO is to enhance the vitality of the region's ocean ecosystem and economy through increased communication and collaboration.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

MARCO and MACO collaborate with governmental agencies, tribal nations and many other interested stakeholders through a series of specially focused work groups on marine debris, ocean acidification, ocean mapping and data, non-consumptive recreation, and offshore renewable energy.

MACO'S GOALS

- Provide a venue for ongoing regional information sharing and coordination about the Mid-Atlantic's Ocean ecosystem and economy;
- Generate a deeper understanding and awareness of state, federal, tribal and regional fisheries management entities' programs and other activities affecting ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic;
- Identify and pursue, where appropriate, opportunities for collaboration on regional ocean issues;
- Generate and maintain a list of contacts engaged in ocean planning to facilitate communication across the region;
- Identify ways to enhance federal data sharing and support for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal to inform ocean planning and management; and
- Engage stakeholders in learning about, identifying and responding to regional ocean issues.

REGIONAL WILDLIFE SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE

ABOUT THE RWSC

[The Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind \(RWSC\)](#) is a collaborative entity among four sectors – federal agencies, state agencies, environmental non-governmental organizations, and offshore wind companies. The RWSC mission is to, “collaboratively and effectively conduct and coordinate relevant, credible, and efficient regional monitoring and research of wildlife and marine ecosystems that supports the advancement of environmentally responsible and cost-efficient offshore wind power development activities in U.S. Atlantic waters.”

The RWSC concept was developed over the course of two years (2019-21) by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, and a broad set of stakeholders developed a vision for a regional science organization to support research and monitoring for wildlife and offshore wind energy. In July 2021, NROC, MARCO, and CSSF were selected to host the RWSC. Representatives from federal agencies, state agencies, offshore wind developers and non-governmental organizations will guide the future work of the RWSC via participation in the Steering Committee. Per the [RWSC Governance Structure](#), each of those four sectors participate in sector caucuses, and choose three seats for representation of their caucus on the Steering Committee. Each Sector’s Caucus convened in fall 2021 to discuss and establish Caucus membership and leadership. Caucus lead entities are listed to the right and will represent each Caucus on the 2022 RWSC Steering Committee.

RWSC STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee contains equal representation of the four Sectors. Representatives are elected by the members of each Sector Caucus. The committee will leverage the expertise of these entities, many of which are already involved in a host of studies to evaluate potential effects of offshore wind development on wildlife and ecosystems. Scientific and technical experts throughout the region will also be invited to provide input on topics such as research priorities, monitoring methods, interpretation of results, and data management.

Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)

Equinor/Shell (alternate)

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Maryland Energy Administration

Massachusetts Clean Energy Center

National Audubon Society

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Natural Resource Defense Council

The Nature Conservancy

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

Orsted North America

United States Fish and Wildlife Service



WORK GROUPS

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The MARCO Communications Committee was established in June 2019 to increase stakeholder engagement around regional ocean issues. The committee is tasked with identifying channels, platforms, and opportunities for stakeholder input to achieve this goal. The committee also works on the creation and dissemination of interesting, timely content that seeks to elevate the issues and ocean resources of the Mid-Atlantic. Through the committee's effort, stakeholders have been engaged, retained, and educated on ocean resource conservation topics. An additional outcome from the committee's efforts is to increase the accessibility of MARCO's content.

MARINE DEBRIS WORK GROUP

This work group meets monthly to carry out social marketing campaigns and other activities to change behavior around the problems of consumer debris, derelict fishing gear, microplastics and abandoned or derelict vessels. Current focus is reducing the intentional release of helium balloons and the use of plastic water bottles. The work group monitors 1 mile stretches of beach in each state to collect data on marine debris types and amounts and displays the data on the MARCO ocean data portal. The group also organizes regional Marine Debris Summits.

MARITIME COMMERCE AND NAVIGATION SAFETY COMMITTEE

The MACO Maritime Commerce and Navigation Safety Work Group works to ensure that issues impacting the safe transit of people and goods on Mid-Atlantic waters are preeminently integrated into regional planning efforts. Among its roles, the work group shares information with the public on Coast Guard studies and proposals (e.g. port access route studies, new anchorage areas) through platforms including the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, as well as prominent navigation safety issues including port/infrastructure changes and storm season updates.

MID-ATLANTIC COASTAL ACIDIFICATION NETWORK (MACAN)

MACAN is co-coordinated by MARCO and MARACOOS. It is a nexus of scientists, tribal, federal, and state agency representatives, resource managers, and affected industry partners who seek to coordinate and guide regional observing, research, and modeling of ocean and coastal acidification. MACAN works to develop a better understanding of the processes associated with estuarine, coastal, and ocean acidification, predict the consequences for marine resources, and devise local adaptation strategies that enable communities and industries to better prepare and adapt.

MID-ATLANTIC OFFSHORE WIND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The Mid-Atlantic Offshore Wind Regional Collaborative (OWRC) provides a forum for interested MACO members to share and receive information about meetings and decision points related to offshore wind in the Mid-Atlantic. The OWRC also works with the OMDT to identify data needs and how to obtain those data, and identifies issues that would benefit from closer collaboration that are not already being addressed by other offshore wind working groups in the region.

NON-CONSUMPTIVE RECREATION WORK GROUP

The Non-Consumptive Recreation work group seeks to identify, characterize, and share information about measures to maintain the recreational value of important non-consumptive recreational areas and the activities they sustain.

OCEAN MAPPING DATA TEAM (OMDT)

The OMDT is a group of state, federal, and tribal agencies as well as consultants working to promote and develop data products for the MARCO Ocean Data Portal. The 40-member OMDT meets quarterly and advises the MARCO Management Board on data and tools to be added to the Portal. There is a wide range of ocean data presented on the Portal including (but not limited to): administrative boundaries, marine life abundance, oceanography, and human uses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Inquiries to any of these work groups may be directed to info@midatlanticocean.org.



GET INVOLVED WITH MARCO

BECOME A WORK GROUP MEMBER

MARCO and MACO collaborate with governmental agencies, tribal nations and many other interested stakeholders through a series of specially focused work groups.

Additional work groups or other coordination efforts will be established and led by MARCO, federal agencies or other regional ocean partners to address emerging priorities over time, based on available resources.

Inquiries to any of these work groups may be directed to info@midatlanticocean.org.

STAY CONNECTED

Check out [MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal](#), an online mapping tool and data library that provides easy access to a wide range of environmental, socioeconomic, infrastructure, and jurisdictional ocean information for viewing and downloading. Click the Feedback button on any page to tell us how we can further enhance the Portal.

[Join MARCO's email list](#) to receive updates and announcements.



FUNDERS SUPPORTING MARCO'S GOALS

Achieving success and reaching MARCO's goals is made possible thanks to the support of our partners and funders. In 2022 our major funders provide the means necessary for MARCO to continue creating communication products, completing research, and collecting data that improves the way ocean resources are managed in the Mid-Atlantic.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)

VIRGINIA COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE





MARCO

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL
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