Maritime Commerce and Navigation Safety Work Group

2024 Work Plan

Work Group Leads:

- State co-lead: Ryan Green, Program Manager, Virginia Coastal Zone Management
- Federal co-lead: Mr. Matt Creelman, Section Chief WWM D5 USCG

Description:

The Mid-Atlantic's coastal and inland waterways are among the busiest marine transportation corridors in the nation, and play a critical role in supporting the nation's economy. As vessel traffic continues to grow and offshore wind energy development progresses, it will be important to plan for changes in maritime commerce, and to mitigate any potential risks to navigation safety and the environment.

The 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, etc.) through platforms including the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, as well as prominent navigation safety issues including port and infrastructure changes and storm season updates.

This work aligns with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan's (OAP) Sustainable Ocean Uses Framework Goal, which is to "plan and provide for existing and emerging ocean uses in a sustainable manner that minimizes conflicts, improves effectiveness and regulatory predictability, and supports economic growth," by improving awareness of maritime commerce and navigation in the Mid-Atlantic[1]. Its primary intention is to increase institutional awareness of new maritime commerce and navigational information for consideration in regional ocean planning.

Work group membership is open to government and non-governmental entities operating in the five Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia that are willing to participate in work group activities. Members are expected to contribute on monthly work group calls and assist with project implementation.

Goals:

- Increase institutional awareness of new maritime commerce and navigational information for consideration in regional ocean planning.
- Enhance maritime commerce and navigation safety in the Mid-Atlantic region by effective utilization of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.
- Foster collaboration and dialogue among relevant stakeholders, agencies, and organizations to leverage collective expertise and insights for informed decision-making aimed at enhancing maritime commerce and navigation safety.

[1] (2016). Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan. In *Bureau of Ocean Energy Management* (p. 26). https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/environmental-stewardship/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Ocean-Action-Plan.pdf

Continued Activities

Activity 1: Ensure that current and updated maritime commerce and navigation data is integrated into the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.

Description
The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal serves as a crucial repository for maritime commerce and navigation data. This activity aims to bolster the Portal's impact by integrating the most pertinent information related to maritime operations, and the most updated data streams vital for safe and efficient navigation in the region's waters. These integrations directly benefit the maritime community and industry, providing up-to-date resources for informed decision-making and seamless operations.

Project Outcomes:
- Identify, aggregate, and integrate new sources of maritime commerce and navigation data into the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal by the end of the biennial reporting period.
- Enhance Portal capacity to provide accurate and timely information for safe and efficient maritime operations in the region

Activity 2: Plan, organize, and host informational webinars and roundtable dialogues to discuss competing ocean usage interests of the Mid-Atlantic region.

Description
There are increasing numbers of competing and overlapping ocean usage interests – both longstanding and emerging – but few opportunities to bring interested parties together for discussion. Periodic discussions promote collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, and allow for adaptive management of ocean resources. As conditions change, stakeholders can adapt their practices, regulations, and resource management strategies to address new challenges and opportunities. Regular dialogues enable participants to access the latest information, data, and research related to ocean usage. It is important to have discussions that include offshore wind considerations, but it is also important to expand beyond wind to include mixed-uses of the Mid-Atlantic ocean, with a focus on bringing together interested parties for roundtable discussions.

Providing credentialed mariners, commercial fishing industry, researchers, and other ocean users with additional opportunities, or "touch points," to interact with agency representatives like the United States Coast Guard (USCG), Maritime Administration (MARAD), Port Authorities, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is important for several reasons, including increased maritime safety, open communication, education and training, data collection and feedback, regulatory compliance, and transparent governance.

Engagement with agency representatives enhances ocean users' safety awareness and understanding of maritime regulations, promoting safer ocean activities. This engagement facilitates open communication, enabling the exchange of critical safety information, updates, and emergency alerts. Regular contact keeps users informed about real-time conditions and hazards, offering a platform to address conflicts and seek resolutions, fostering better coordination among stakeholders. These interactions also allow agencies to collect valuable feedback for policy

development, enabling users to advocate for their needs. Demonstrating transparency and active engagement fosters public trust, enhancing the credibility of regulatory processes.

Project Outcomes:

- Identify potential topics, including:
    a. CG Fairways changes and considerations of animal migration routes along the coast; expand rationale behind the changes. Opportunity for cross-pollination with the Ocean Conservation Work Group
    b. Navigation safety ahead of and during offshore wind development
    c. USCG NAVCEN transition to GIS-based LNM
    d. NOAA OCS transition from S-57 to S-100
- Determine achievable schedule for webinars; plan and host

Activity 3: Ensure easy access to information on maritime event resources through integration with the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal **(NEW)**

Description

The Mid-Atlantic Maritime Event Resource Data Portal Theme aims to streamline and optimize planning efforts for maritime events by providing a centralized, user-friendly layer for accessing critical information and resources. Our proposed solution involves creating a comprehensive portal layer with clearly defined boundaries of relevant agencies and stakeholders, enabling users to quickly identify the appropriate authorities and contacts based on the type of maritime event. Whether it's an oil spill, hazardous materials release, coastal storm debris, or marine mammal strikes or strandings, the portal could direct users to the corresponding agency or resource and contacts. By consolidating critical information in a single, accessible layer, this tool will significantly enhance efficiency during maritime events, benefiting the broader maritime community and saving invaluable time and resources.

Project Outcomes - ongoing in 2024:

- Data collection and analysis
    a. Preliminary stakeholder conversations to determine user needs and type of events
    b. Define the scope of work for developing the resource layer, outlining the tasks, responsibilities, and dependencies involved in implementing the portal layer (including specific deliverables, milestones, and timelines)
    c. Compile existing data sources pertinent to maritime events, encompassing agency AOR boundaries, contacts, response protocols, incident data, geospatial information, and specialized resources.
        - Determine jurisdictions for each use or need (e.g., stranding center for each state, districts for each agency, regional coordinator for services, etc.).
- Technical feasibility assessment
    a. Evaluate the technical requirements (data integration) and infrastructure necessary to develop and deploy the portal layer.

Project Outcomes - 2025:

- Implementation:
    a. Create a Mid-A Data Portal layer that delineates boundaries of federal and state agencies in order to see geographically during a maritime event what type of event goes with which agency or resource within an agency (including a point of contact).

    - Create the map in GIS, input the attributes behind it, and group it together

b. Promote the newly integrated layers through partner meetings, Portal outreach activities or Ocean Story, ensuring widespread awareness and utilization among relevant stakeholders.