

# MACO Stakeholder Engagement Plan

## Background

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO) was established by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) to foster collaboration among states, federal agencies, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), federally recognized tribes and stakeholders. In recognition of the intersecting responsibilities for managing and using the ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic, MACO will build on the responsibilities and authorities of the participants to advance regional ocean planning.

## Objectives

Government agencies, state-recognized tribal entities, non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, industry partners, fishing communities, and others will be invited to participate in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum, periodic conference calls and webinars. In addition to the MACO engagement described herein, each MACO Work Group will identify, in their work plans, opportunities for stakeholder engagement consistent with their objectives. MACO engagement will ensure that broad perspectives are considered and, where possible, opportunities are identified to leverage collective efforts for the advancement of ocean planning and stewardship. Stakeholders, for the purpose of this document, will be defined as groups/organizations or individuals who represent or have an identified interest in specific ocean issues (e.g. conservation, tourism, security, navigational safety, industry, academia).

General principles for stakeholder engagement include the following:

- provide regular updates to stakeholders;
- identify a range of engagement opportunities for stakeholders in MACO activities; and
- ensure adequate stakeholder input into MACO efforts.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The following table outlines proposed methods of outreach and involvement of various MACO stakeholders and the public. More in-depth descriptions of the methods are below.

Method of Engagement	Stakeholders	Input on	Involvement	Engagement Type and Objectives
<b>(1) Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum</b>	Diverse group of external stakeholders, general public and representatives of MACO organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gaps and opportunities for action</li> <li>● Existing efforts and aligning future actions</li> <li>● Recommendations and criteria for prioritizing strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At least one forum per year</li> <li>● Open public event with presentations, expert panels, breakout discussions, etc.</li> <li>● Pre-Forum survey and webinar</li> </ul>	Active engagement: Obtain info from stakeholders that will help identify new opportunities for collective efforts led by MACO, gain perspective on relative importance of issues in region, and identify opportunities to leverage existing efforts.
<b>(2) Briefings from MACO leadership</b>	Varying: Webinars or conference calls geared toward specific stakeholders and webinars open to the general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relevance of MACO's strategies/priorities to stakeholder interests.</li> <li>● Special topics related to MACO mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Webinars or conference calls sharing updates from leadership and focusing on special topics for specific stakeholders</li> <li>● Open public webinars on topics related to MACO mission</li> <li>● 1:1 Conversations between leadership and stakeholders as needed</li> </ul>	Active and passive engagement: Obtain feedback on MACO strategies and priorities for addressing ocean issues through webinars and direct outreach to stakeholders.

<p><b>(3) Stakeholders engagement via Work Groups</b></p>	<p>Each Work Group will identify, in their work plans, opportunities for stakeholder engagement consistent with their objectives. (Note: stakeholders who participate in Work Groups are not MACO members unless they are government, tribal or quasi-governmental entities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Process and methods</li> <li>● Technical advice</li> <li>● Messaging and outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recurring meetings (ongoing)</li> <li>● 1:1 Conversations between leadership and stakeholders as needed</li> </ul>	<p>Active and passive engagement: Enhance MACO's impact on regional ocean issues by leveraging technical expertise of stakeholders through collaborative efforts.</p>
<p><b>(4) Provide opportunities for general stakeholder and public input on MACO and MACO's activities.</b></p>	<p>All stakeholders and members of the general public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Open-ended feedback on stakeholder and general public interests and concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online resources to solicit feedback year-round</li> <li>● 1:1 Conversations between leadership and stakeholders as needed</li> </ul>	<p>Active and passive engagement: Obtain perspectives on MACO strategies and priorities, identify new opportunities for collaboration, discover resources to leverage</p>
<p><b>(5) Communicate progress on MACO and MACO activities</b></p>	<p>All stakeholders and members of the general public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All MACO business and general topics of interest</li> </ul>	<p>Use of digital platforms (e.g. MARCO website, email blasts, social media) to share info on MACO and Work Groups/collaborative efforts' work plans and progress reports</p>	<p>Passive engagement: Educate stakeholders and the general public on MACO work, regional ocean issues, upcoming events, etc.</p>

## **(1) Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum**

MACO will convene an annual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum as a venue for regional information sharing, coordination and collaboration, and to enhance the region's ability to leverage existing efforts and information across multiple state and federal government agencies, federally-recognized tribes, non-governmental entities and ocean stakeholders. The Forum will identify and discuss existing and emerging issues related to the Mid-Atlantic's ocean ecosystem and economy, along with opportunities to collaborate, consistent with each entity's mission and priorities.

The Forum is MACO's signature annual event and its prime vehicle for public and stakeholder engagement. The event will be open to the public and offer ample opportunities for those interested to take part in the proceedings. Forum attendees can join breakout group discussions dedicated to special topics, engage in question/answer sessions with expert panelists and provide input to MACO leadership during dedicated discussion periods.

MACO will conduct outreach with its members and other partners to determine the topics, speakers, formats and logistics of the events through digital surveys, webinars, the advice of stakeholders and other means. To promote participation, forum venues will be rotated throughout the region and efforts will be made to choose sites that are easily accessible.

As events are scheduled, MACO will work with MARCO to promote the details widely via email blasts, press announcements, individual outreach and other available digital platforms. When resources allow, the proceedings will be live-streamed for the benefit of those who can't attend in person. Videos of presentations/panels will be posted online following forums.

## **(2) Briefings from MACO Leadership**

MACO leadership will provide periodic briefing sessions for interested stakeholders and the general public. These will include at least one pre-forum webinar that will serve the purposes of 1) providing updates on MACO's recent activities and planning process; 2) gathering valuable feedback on MACO's work; 3) sharing preliminary details on plans and logistics for the upcoming annual Forum; and 4) soliciting ideas from stakeholders for the Forum.

MACO will also periodically organize webinars dedicated to specific topics relevant to ocean planning (e.g. offshore wind, marine debris). These sessions may include presentations from Work Group members, special guests and representatives of MACO entities (e.g. states, federal agencies, tribes). Webinars will be posted online for the benefit of those who could not attend live.

### **(3) Stakeholder Engagement via Work Groups and Collaborative Efforts**

MACO has already identified a number of collaborative efforts and/or Work Groups (“Work Groups”), and intends to identify more in the future. Work groups should host periodic meetings for stakeholders that provide opportunities to:

- Pursue actions towards common goals and share science, resources and information.
- Provide input from Work Group members to stakeholders on what is most useful.
- Help with gap analysis, strategy selection, and implementation of specific strategies.

[Note: Stakeholder participation in Work Groups does not make stakeholders members of MACO. MACO membership is confined to government agencies, tribal and non-governmental entities as listed on the [MACO homepage](#).]

Work groups will also develop individual work plans each year containing plans for stakeholder engagement. The Work Groups will post reports online at least twice per year summarizing their progress on tasks outlined in the plans. Summaries of engagement plans for MACO’s current Work Groups may be found in their work plans.

MACO Work Groups include:

- Maritime Commerce and Navigation Safety
- Mid-Atlantic Coastal Acidification Network (MACAN)
- Non-Consumptive Recreation
- Marine Debris

Collaboration on regional ocean mapping and data is supported through the MARCO Ocean Mapping and Data Team (OMDT). The Portal provides engagement opportunities through semi-monthly webinars and in-person trainings that are free and open to the public. Users can also invite Portal Team members to conduct trainings for their organizations or meetings in person or online. Feedback can be submitted to the OMDT and Portal team through its online form at [www.portal.midatlanticocean.org](http://www.portal.midatlanticocean.org) or via email at [portal@midatlanticocean.org](mailto:portal@midatlanticocean.org).

MACAN also frequently offers educational webinars that are open to the public. Users can consult the MACAN website at [www.midacan.org](http://www.midacan.org) for upcoming webinar dates and topics. Those interested may contact MACAN directly at [info@MidACAN.org](mailto:info@MidACAN.org).

#### **(4) Provide Opportunities for General Stakeholder Input**

MACO will provide platforms for collecting feedback from stakeholders and members of the public throughout the year. The primary avenue will be a contact email ([info@midatlanticocean.org](mailto:info@midatlanticocean.org)) provided on MACO web pages for those interested in sending their feedback/questions any time, day or night. Those inquiries will then be directed by MARCO staff to the appropriate MACO and/or Work Group representative.

#### **(5) Communicate Progress on MACO and MACO Activities**

MACO will employ a suite of tools for providing the public with online information about its work throughout the year. MACO currently maintains a group of pages on the MARCO website within its “Ocean Planning” directory. The main hub for information about MACO is <http://midatlanticocean.org/mid-atlantic-committee-on-the-ocean/>. This page contains a general overview of MACO’s makeup, mission and activities, as well as links to important documents and online resources. Other pages include:

- Work Groups and Collaborative Efforts: Contains descriptions of current Work Groups with relevant links and list of upcoming activities.
- Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum: An overview of the Forum with information about upcoming events and links to past resources.
- Forum Pages: Individual pages will be constructed to house videos, presentations, agendas and other multimedia for past events. One page is currently available with resources from the 2019 forum at Monmouth University.

MACO will also take advantage of MARCO’s other communications platforms for sharing updates as appropriate. Periodic email blasts will be disseminated using MARCO’s Constant Contact and messages may be boosted by social media accounts administered by MARCO and the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal. Comments can always be received at [info@midatlanticocean.org](mailto:info@midatlanticocean.org).