

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Conservation: Building Partnerships to Take Action
Summary

***Mid-Atlantic Ocean Conservation:
Building Partnerships to Take Action***

December 9-10, 2009, New York City

Sponsored by the

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL ON THE OCEAN

A Partnership in Ocean Conservation



Summary Report

January 2010

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Acknowledgements

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provided enthusiastic support and funding assistance.

Over 150 leaders and representatives of ocean interests invested their valuable time, energy, and expertise.

Eighteen professional, skilled facilitators in the Mid-Atlantic region volunteered their time and expertise so that the table work could be as productive and enjoyable as possible.

The Broad Street Ballroom generously worked to accommodate MARCO's limited budget and provided comprehensive, professional service.

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A Mid-Atlantic Ocean stakeholder conference focusing on *Mid-Atlantic Ocean Conservation: Building Partnerships to Take Action* (the Conference) took place December 9-

10, 2009 at the Broad Street Ballroom in Lower Manhattan, New York City.

It was hosted by The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) comprised of the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia; and funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

This document summarizes the outcomes of this significant gathering and provides the basis for what is anticipated to be ongoing engagement on behalf of a healthy Mid-Atlantic Ocean and the communities that depend on it.

In recognition of the essential value and necessity of broad partnerships, the *Mid-Atlantic Governors Agreement on Ocean Conservation* (the Agreement) called for this ocean stakeholder conference.

Formalized on June 4, 2009 and signed by the five governors, the historic Agreement identifies four overarching Priorities: offshore renewable energy, habitat protection, water quality improvement, and climate change adaptation.

The Agreement also commits the five states to specific shared actions to advance the Priorities and created the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) as the mechanism for collaborative ocean management.

The Agreement additionally recognizes that only by working together on ocean issues that cross state borders will the states be better able to protect shared resources, maintain their collective economic and environmental well being, anticipate and resolve potential conflicts, and leverage greater federal funding and attention on Mid-Atlantic Ocean issues.

To learn more about the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), please see

www.midatlanticocean.org

Over the 1.5 days of the Conference, over 150 high-profile leaders and representatives of the full range of ocean interests learned from each other, deliberated, and made commitments to advancing MARCO's shared actions on its key Priorities (see Appendices A and B). All shared the common interest in Mid-Atlantic ocean health and coastal community vitality. Participants included key state agency staff from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia; high profile representatives of key federal agencies; leaders of organizations, industry and business leaders; and general citizenry with ocean interests (see Appendix E).

The Conference's Objectives

1. Raise public awareness and build a broader constituency for ocean issues.
2. Solicit feedback and build support from the public, constituency groups and a broad base of key stakeholders for the Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation and the initial actions identified and underway.
3. Identify any additional issues or priorities that stakeholders may have regarding ocean issues.
4. Identify programs, activities and resources that stakeholders will commit towards accomplishing the initial actions and remaining actions in the Agreement.
5. Create stronger, lasting partnerships among stakeholder interests across the region and identify steps that may be taken to continue to engage stakeholders.

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Format and process:

Although the Conference’s program provided for essential overviews of MARCO’s Priorities and shared actions, participants invested the majority of their time in five rounds of discussions and facilitated by skilled professionals. To maximize the richness and productivity of these discussions, and achieve an ambitious program in a short time, MARCO used the innovative process provided by *AmericaSpeaks* (www.americaspeaks.org).

This included the use of laptop computers at each table electronically feeding discussions to a “Theme Team” made up of knowledgeable MARCO agency staff who conducted ongoing packaging of the emerging themes and projected them back to the whole room at the end of each session. Using individual keypads, participants were then able to provide a sense of what resonated strongest to them. This simultaneous and instant feedback provided for a stimulating and enjoyable pace. At the end, using the keypads, 85% of participants ranked the process as satisfying or very satisfying.



MARCO Priority: **Climate Change** **Adaptation**

Climate change impacts in the Mid-Atlantic region are already being seen in the form of increased air and water temperatures, sea level rise and ocean acidification. These trends will have far reaching impacts such as more sustained extreme storm surges, increased coastal erosion, flooding of critical public infrastructure, inundation of coastal wetlands, and saline intrusion into coastal aquifers. The coastline is composed of sensitive habitats that may not be able to adapt to the rising temperatures and sea level. Likewise, the coast is densely populated. It is supported by a significant transportation system, buildings, and homes

that will be increasingly vulnerable to periodic flooding or even permanent inundation. One of MARCO’s goals includes preparing the region for the impacts of climate change, primarily sea level rise impacts on regional infrastructure, coastal habitat and shoreline management.

Objectives:

MARCO’s climate change objectives include identifying regional transportation infrastructure that is vulnerable to sea level rise and increased flood hazards, acquiring data needed to assess regional vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise impacts to infrastructure and coastal habitats, creating a means of storing and delivering the data needed to make decisions, and instituting sharing of coastal vulnerability, community resiliency and management information. MARCO also hopes to initiate sea level rise adaptation measures to collectively reduce the region’s vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise.

As a starting place for accomplishing these climate change objectives, the Mid-Atlantic states agreed to start with the following tasks: identify opportunities to work with the federal government to promote adaptation and, where appropriate, integrate climate change and sea level rise planning measures into federal policies and programs; address data gaps for assessing regional vulnerability; facilitate a climate change and sea level rise information exchange between states; and develop consistent communications and messaging to convey the information on climate change impacts to the public.

Opportunities and challenges:

Attendees felt that current planning and policies promote short term decision-making that ignores future problems and that MARCO provides a chance to update those policies and make changes to support low impact development. They see this as an ideal

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opportunity to learn from each other to promote the best practices needed to adapt to a changing climate coupled with sea level rise, balancing protection of the built environment with protection of natural resources and to address regional data needs. Attendees would like to see states consider impacts of climate change beyond sea level rise.

Actions Private Entities (NGOs & Industry)

Could Take: Based on the discussion and polling conducted at the meeting there are numerous actions that private and non-governmental organizations are already undertaking or could take that would align with the objectives of MARCO. One main action would be to provide education for all, from Governors to the public at large, on climate change, how it will impact the region and what measures we may take for mitigation and adaptation. Private and non-governmental organizations may also identify key habitats at risk and what direct protection measures we could take. The meeting attendees felt there was a strong need to provide funding for research, pilot projects and monitoring and assessment to apply what we know now and study what we need to know in order to adapt and mitigate for the effects of climate change on the region. The meeting highlighted the need for a common message and how this will help with advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Ideas for Legislative Action:

Meeting attendees were asked what types of legislation should be passed to help with climate change adaptation. The idea that garnered the most support was to remove incentives for developing in vulnerable areas and create disincentives to prevent the continued development of these areas. Attendees felt that the existing development practices only serve to exacerbate the problems the region already faces. There was also strong support for amendments to building codes and for amendments to regulations to consider sea level rise and climate change.

Additional Long-term Actions by the States and Federal Partners:

Looking to the future, the meeting helped to identify what long-term additional actions should be taken by the states and federal partners. One of the most important things identified was to help prepare long-term adaptation plans for communities and to re-evaluate post-storm rebuilding laws and policies. Other actions attendees felt are important are to establish baseline measurements to help identify climate change impacts and to better understand how to mitigate and adapt to them. Overall, attendees felt that a continuing goal of MARCO should be enhanced coordination with the various private and non-governmental organizations in the region and strengthening of ties between various levels of government to implement MARCO's goals and actions.



MARCO Priority: **Habitat Protection**

Vital estuaries, fed by large rivers and countless tributaries, a broad sandy continental shelf, migration corridors for an abundance of wildlife, cold water coral reefs, deep submarine canyons – these are some of the diverse ocean and near shore habitats of the Mid-Atlantic region. They support a rich diversity of marine life, including sea turtles, whales, dolphins, seabirds, and an array of fish and crustaceans. This ecological wealth supports valuable commercial and recreational fisheries, and shares the ocean with other economic activities, including shipping, dredged material disposal, and sand and gravel mining. Offshore energy development in the form of wind farms is almost certain to join this list. As ocean uses intensify, so too does the need to understand potential impacts to marine habitats and wildlife, and how best to manage the human activities that affect complex ocean ecosystems

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on which humans depend for food, recreation, energy and even health. Although the states' jurisdictions only extend 3 nautical miles offshore, all of the states have a vast economic and ecological interest in the habitats located both within and beyond 3 nautical miles.

Objectives:

At the December Stakeholders' Conference participants identified several ways in which MARCO could make progress on the Governors' goals of protecting canyons, identifying key habitats, creating a regional internet mapping system to begin a marine spatial planning effort and ultimately creating habitat protection and restoration policies.

They recommended we learn from the successes of existing programs such as Marine Protected Areas which develop benchmarks for success and then exercise adaptive management techniques. Stakeholders encouraged the use of new technologies to collect data in one place, integrate it and then use it to assess and protect ocean habitats. Some of those efforts could potentially be funded with fees from some of the new uses (e.g. energy). New GIS technologies allow us to engage in marine spatial planning and the process can include economic valuations of habitats and the services they provide. MARCO will have to determine how much data is needed to make "good enough" management decisions and assess cumulative impacts. Data gaps will have to be addressed where they do exist, keeping in mind the expense and difficulty of collecting data in remote areas.

The stakeholders said multiple users need to be incorporated into the process to build a broad-based partnership and strong collaborations that take advantage of local knowledge and recognize the expected impacts of climate change and sea level rise. It will be difficult to protect habitats in the face of so many competing uses. This will require new and improved information sharing capabilities and will also push us to explore new educational

opportunities such as identifying flagship species to motivate participation.

MARCO was encouraged to link existing terrestrial protected habitats to potential marine protected habitats and to capitalize on the convergence of new interests in the ocean (e.g. energy production) to bring new money and new partners into the habitat protection effort. By providing a regional forum, it was recognized that MARCO could provide preemptive policy making at the regional level and become an equal partner with the federal government. Also, by protecting habitats regionally, MARCO could create a more efficient (and smaller footprint) regional transmission grid.

Actions Private Entities (NGOs & Industry)

Could Take: Stakeholders were also asked how they (NGOs and industries) could help make progress on the Governors' goals. They all saw themselves as partners in helping to collect data, transferring their knowledge to MARCO, helping to identify the most important habitats and advocating for their protection and playing an active role in marine spatial planning. They also thought they could advocate for more resources and funding for habitat identification, research and protection, and engage local communities and user groups through new approaches such as social marketing to educate and raise awareness of the public, government officials, and other effected user groups. Finally they saw themselves playing an active role in building consensus among their own interest groups and looking for ways to get ocean messages added on to their existing messages.

Ideas for Legislative Action:

All participants were asked to consider what legislative actions should be taken to better promote the goals of MARCO. Eight themes emerged, including creating and funding a framework for marine spatial planning, and increasing funding authorizations for habitat protection activities. Also, stakeholders wanted to ensure revenue sharing from offshore energy

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production, and incorporate marine habitat into state Wildlife Action Plans and legislatively require a connection with the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Participants also wanted to increase restrictions on certain activities known to damage important and vulnerable habitat types, and broaden ocean observing to include all data (physical, chemical, biological, other). Other opportunities to protect nearshore and upland habitats must be sought.

Some stakeholders wanted to advocate for a specific legislative designation to protect an important habitat area, for example, Essential Fish Habitat designations, Marine Protected Area designations and Marine Sanctuary designations.

Finally, stakeholders wanted legislation that that protects habitat by targeting specific activities (commercial fisheries, renewable energy).

Additional Long-term Actions by the States and Federal Partners:

Finally the stakeholders were asked whether there were additional actions they would like to see MARCO pursue in the future. Many were mentioned and they focused on long term monitoring and research on cumulative impacts and climate change impacts; considering the impacts of offshore aquaculture and developing appropriate policies; devising a methodology to compare relative “value” of habitats; considering potential impacts of offshore oil and gas leasing; designating more marine protected areas for priority sites; enforcing restrictions; establishing a clear process for siting new projects in the Mid-Atlantic;



advocating for more flexible use of designated federal funds for habitat protection (e.g. allow multiple federal programs to co-fund a project and relax matching fund requirements; and finally, creating a structure for MARCO that will ensure its future.



MARCO Priority: Water Quality Improvement

The beaches and shores of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean

generate billions of dollars in tourism-related revenue each year, and are a major economic driver for the five ocean states of the region. Commercial and recreational fisheries also support coastal communities and provide significant economic output. These activities rely on maintaining high water quality within the Mid-Atlantic Ocean region to ensure the protection of human and ecological health through swimmable and fishable waters. Significant regulatory efforts and investments in infrastructure have resulted in great improvements to water quality, and state and federal programs have reduced many sources of pollution. To a large degree, the remaining threats to keeping the region’s beaches clean, addressing seafood safety, and preserving critical habitats can be tied to urban and agricultural runoff (particularly during storm events), air emissions and aging wastewater treatment infrastructure. These causes continue to contribute to beach closures, marine debris, contaminated seafood, fishing gear fouling, oxygen-starved “dead zones” (hypoxia), eutrophication, and harmful algal blooms. Of high interest to the Mid-Atlantic states is the continued health of the ocean shoreline and ecosystems.

Objectives:

One of the MARCO priority goals is to protect human and environmental health and increase

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the ocean-related economic value of the region's coastal waters by maintaining and improving the region's water quality. To address this goal, the five states committed to promoting greater and smarter federal investments for infrastructure upgrades to the nation's oldest or inadequate wastewater treatment infrastructure. They will work to reduce or eliminate trash and waste entering waterways and the ocean. They also will improve delivery of and expand collection of water quality data, which will improve water quality management effectiveness. And finally, they will develop a plan to address atmospheric sources of pollution.

Opportunities and Challenges:

At the December Stakeholders' conference, participants identified many opportunities for MARCO to make progress on the Governors' objectives, as well as challenges to moving forward. Participants identified a number of main themes that defined some of the key opportunities for MARCO. One such opportunity is linking water quality to habitat restoration and protection in areas including sea grass and shellfish beds. Some participants see potential benefit in redefining standards and indicators to include both human and biological health criteria.

Others thought MARCO should pursue a broad range of actions, such as: seeking legislative changes; taking advantage of public educational opportunities; influencing state coordination; linking stakeholders; data sharing; building capacity; creating a portal for information sharing; and leveraging resources. Some participants saw opportunities for the public to support water quality infrastructure improvements, or identified broader opportunities to build shared regional priorities, networks, and partnerships.

Some participants thought MARCO could pursue an inventory of regional assets, including biological habitats and environmental data. A

related idea was to use new and available technology to measure, report, and share data.

Another opportunity brought up by participants was a new emphasis on social sciences to understand opportunities and challenges. Finally, some participants thought there is an opportunity to use federal stimulus funds, market-based solutions, and financial incentives to improve stormwater and waste water management and infrastructure.

Participants identified a number of significant challenges. Some were concerned about effectively addressing threats to coastal and ocean water quality such as: invasive species, sea level rise, and marine debris (plastics), aging sewerage systems, CSOs (Combined Sewer Overflows), biomedical waste, salt-water intrusion into coastal waters, dredged material disposal. Others were concerned about determining who actually controls or contributes to some of these threats to water quality, like atmospheric deposition. Still others were concerned about the geographic scope of the challenges – specifically, addressing lagoon and coastal bays as well as ocean waters and land-based sources of pollution to them.

Participants were concerned about monitoring, particularly the consistency of monitoring efforts, and data collection and analysis (site specific and regional). A related challenge is redefining standards and indicators to include both human and biological health criteria. Participants identified other challenges such as finding adequate funding and prioritizing projects for funding, improving the enforcement of water quality regulations, and the need to renew/reinvigorate the use of existing authorities. Some participants see challenges in building capacity and consensus locally to support smart development (even housing) and infrastructure changes necessary to combat some of the development-related threats to water quality. A related concern is how to educate, influence, and increase

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understanding, as well as change behavior to lessen individual impacts on water quality, given that there are so many “nay-sayers”.

Actions NGOs & Industry Could Take:

Participants were asked what actions non-government organizations and industry partners could take to advance the Governors’ priority to improve water quality. The recommendations from participants included advocating for increased funding, stronger regulations and enforcement, and developing related messaging. Some ideas focused on building capacity for action. These included partnerships with groups like industry, academia, or local government; increased education and communication with partners and the public at large, to inform them of “the cost of failing to take action versus the cost of action”; and identification and promotion of successful partnerships as models. Participants saw potential actions focused on broadening research to include social elements – e.g., why do people litter? – and providing monitoring to fill gaps on water quality data.

Ideas for Legislative Action:

All participants were asked to consider what legislative actions should be taken to help MARCO achieve its goals. Some of the more common themes included better addressing non-point sources: upland, watershed, land-use and impacts on coastal water quality, and securing better funding and enforcement of existing legislation. Many participants were interested in more timely reauthorization of existing legislation to address new sources of impairments (Clean Water Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, BEACH Act), or legislation that could provide support for regional organizations like MARCO. Some participants identified a need for periodic review of water quality standards, and broadening the list of “pollutants”. Participants saw a need to address marine debris sources by legislation and tying it to water quality standards. Finally, some participants identified incentives tied to

improving water quality as a potential legislative change.

Additional Long-term Actions by the States and Federal Partners:

The participants were asked what actions state and federal partners should pursue, in addition to actions MARCO has already committed to pursuing. Some of the most common responses were to continue to engage stakeholders, public, and local governments and find a role for them in moving forward on MARCO’s agenda. Some participants specifically called for working with existing groups (e.g., ocean observing groups) to develop a coalition on water quality monitoring to improve collection, coordination, and data management. Others identified specific needs related to water quality, including finding market-based solutions to address sources of water quality impacts, updating/modernizing sewer and wastewater systems, and paying increased attention to near-shore water quality as well as non-point source pollution.



MARCO Priority: Development of Offshore Renewable Energy

Increased attention to the Mid-Atlantic region’s offshore energy resources is due to several factors including a greater awareness of the need for renewable energy as a means of addressing climate change. The Mid-Atlantic Ocean currently plays an important role in the transmission of fossil fuels to population centers.

These ocean waters, however, are also host to tremendous, virtually untapped, sources of renewable energy including hydrokinetic, salinity and thermal gradient, and wind.

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The imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy independence, together with growing citizen interest has elevated renewable energy on U.S. public policy agendas and in the public consciousness. The Mid-Atlantic Bight (Massachusetts to North Carolina) is endowed with a gently sloping continental shelf and abundant strong and steady offshore winds. In addition, even though it is in its infancy wind energy technology is increasingly suitable for utility-scale applications comparable to conventional energy technologies, unlike hydrokinetic sources which need additional developments to reach this level of development. Wind energy, therefore, has the best potential of all the renewable energies for the region in the next few years. For this reason offshore wind energy has become a current focus of policy, research, and investment and several projects are under development from Maine to Virginia. One additional advantage to Mid-Atlantic offshore wind is its proximity to the east coast load center, thereby reducing the need for potentially expensive transmission upgrades to furnish renewable energy from other parts of the country. The Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) has the greatest renewable energy potential relative to other OCS regions (including the Gulf of Mexico, Pacific coast, and Alaska), and in the next five-seven years offshore wind power presents the greatest opportunity (technically and feasibly) to harness that renewable energy potential.

Objectives:

As a regional governing body, MARCO has developed a legislative agenda to address offshore renewable energy issues and promote its development. Within the MARCO agenda, the five states are working to remove unnecessary federal/state barriers to the appropriate development of offshore renewable energy development by reviewing current regulations and permitting processes. In addition, MARCO will proactively investigate and provide for future needs, funding options,

best practices and innovative research and development through advocating for the extension of the production tax credit for wind development, and plan for future data needs. Finally, MARCO hopes to integrate renewable energy siting concerns into the data management and comprehensive offshore mapping effort underway for the MARCO habitat protection goal.

In addition to the legislative agenda, MARCO seeks to engage stakeholders in its activities. During the *Mid-Atlantic Ocean Conservation: Building Partnerships to Take Action*, held on December 9-10, 2009, stakeholders were asked their opinions on the development of offshore renewable energy. More specifically, they were asked to identify opportunities and challenges associated with renewable energy, the actions that they feel NGOs and private industry can take, potential legislative actions to take, and additional actions that states & federal partners can take, to advance the MARCO objectives.

Opportunities and Challenges:

In summary, those present stated that offshore renewable energy will provide unique opportunities for creating new jobs and providing economic growth, reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, provide technical capacity and regional policies, and allow for an even distribution of new revenues (that result from renewable energy). However, participants said that developing offshore renewable energy could also come with significant challenges, such as mitigating negative impacts to natural resources, mitigating permitting problems, and taking into account the opinions of those who do not want turbines in their backyards.

Participants felt that marine spatial planning (MSP) must be multiple use, and not limited to mapping for wind turbine placement. Other challenges stated include the high price of wind energy, as well as a lack of data on both the business and science side.

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Actions NGOs & Industry Could Take:

Most stakeholders present felt that NGOs and the private industry should help to conduct and/or fund more of the much needed research on the impacts and the process of enabling offshore renewable energy, as well as offer incentives for other sectors to do so. They stated that research should be focused on the environment to be affected, policy and planning mechanisms, as well as cost-benefit analyses. A detailed cost-benefit analysis should be conducted, so that that wind projects are economically feasible and create long term jobs.

NGOs and the private sector can also help to educate stakeholders, the public, and legislators, by better informing them of the benefits and the challenges of these issues, so that they may become more involved throughout the entire process. Stakeholders said that NGOs and the private sector should promote renewable energy and lobby to develop new legislation, so that advancements in alternative energy will be concrete. However, as observed in the meeting, some stakeholders believe that wind energy is not aesthetically pleasing, and will not support placing turbines within sight from the shore, unless compromises are made regarding the siting of projects. Therefore, participants said that NGOs and private entities can help with these negotiations, advocating the advancement of a form of renewable energy that is appreciated by all.

There is also the general idea among participants that NGOs and private industry should promote and advocate the protection of the environment by serving as “environmental watchdogs”. Stakeholders stated that migratory birds and other marine organisms must be monitored and protected, before and after wind turbines are installed. One group suggested that the fishing industry can help measure the effects of these turbines in the future. In addition to sound marine spatial planning efforts, many said that impacts of the

construction of wind turbines and transmission lines must be well understood, and site specific data is crucial in order to balance habitat concerns with project siting. Others were concerned with the development of a boom bust job market, where those entities who initiated renewable energy first benefited initially, but were then left with no jobs in the future. They advocated for each entity participating based upon their expertise and perhaps testing different construction styles and techniques, so that if something went wrong, power would still be available. They felt it would be better to have hundreds of jobs for a career lifetime instead of thousands of jobs for ten years. Finally, many participants felt that NGOs and the private sector should collaborate with academic institutions as well as state and local government, in a neutral forum, in order to enhance the process of developing offshore alternative energy. NGOs and private entities can create this forum, and promote healthy dialogue among all stakeholders involved.

Ideas for Legislative Action:

Those present advocated for new legislation that will facilitate the development of offshore renewable energy. Stakeholders felt that legislation is needed to provide consistency across MARCO states for regulatory programs, data collection, and standards. Also, new legislation can provide for data production, and allow for stakeholder involvement before siting. Funding is also needed, and legislation could set up funding for marine spatial planning , as well as address funding and revenue sharing issues. Finally, stakeholders said that new policies need to be developed or amended to provide incentives for exploration, developments, and energy conservation (including a reduction in carbon-based energy), and set up a process to decommission fossil fuel generation sites as renewables develop.

Additional Long-term Actions by the States and Federal Partners: Along with NGOs and the private industry, participants felt the need for

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further action from MARCO and federal agencies. As a whole, stakeholders felt that MARCO, as an entity for regional collaboration, should be strengthened, and continue with its efforts, while planning for the future by creating a vision for what the Mid-Atlantic should look like in the future. However, additional actions must be taken to make the development of offshore energy possible. For instance, stakeholders said that MARCO should make a stronger effort to inform the public of the progress of its actions regarding alternative energy, by tracking and reporting the progression of its action items. It must also inform NGOs and the private sector of their roles and how they can assist in ongoing processes, so that all agencies can better coordinate. Collaboration with federal agencies and task forces, such as the Minerals Management Service Task Force, is also important.

More specifically, many participants felt that states and federal agencies should better collaborate to make the initiation of offshore renewable energy projects as efficient as possible. States need to work together (using MARCO as a platform) to streamline the permitting process to accelerate the construction of efficient energy projects. Participants reiterated that collaboration is important to ensure the efficient functionality of offshore energy projects. For example, states need to remove regulatory barriers in order to better export energy from one state to another. Some suggested that a backbone transmission cable is needed on the OCS in order to make energy transmission from one state to another more efficient. Some participants mentioned that states must coordinate so that a proper 'load balance' is achieved; if one state's energy level decreases, another state can step in and assist so that the region has continuous energy. Separately, states need to incorporate renewable energy into their energy policies, as well as educate local governments.

In addition to NGOs and private industry, stakeholders said that states and federal partners must provide the necessary funding for research on offshore renewables, including other types of energy such as hydro kinetic, wave, and even current forms of non-renewable energy. Participants said that data gaps must be identified, and existing data must be used more extensively in order to assess the cumulative impacts of offshore energy. Many suggested that states create a regional GIS portal that could assist all stakeholders, as well as complement the on-going Federal marine spatial planning efforts.

Appendices

- A Conference Agenda
- B *AmericaSpeaks* final Report of Themes
- C *AmericaSpeaks* Raw Data from Conference
- D Handouts on MARCO Priorities, Legislative Agenda, and offshore spatial planning
- E Worksheet to report existing programs and initiatives
- F Conference Participants