

# MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL COUNCIL ON THE OCEAN

## *A Partnership in Ocean Conservation*



**December 9 - 10, 2009**  
**Final Report**

Representatives from the full range of ocean interests came together for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean's stakeholder summit to discuss how the region will address a range of ocean issues, including off shore renewable energy, habitat protection, water quality improvement, and climate change adaptation.

MARCO was formed this summer out of an historic agreement between the five Mid-Atlantic governors from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Participants in the meeting worked together in small groups discussing and developing ideas. Then, using keypad polling and groupware computers, participants identified room-wide themes. This final report contains the ideas generated during the two day meeting.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

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;

### Who Participated in the Summit?

*Where are you from?*

1. Delaware (12%)
2. New Jersey (21%)
3. New York (28%)
4. Maryland (15%)
5. Virginia (13%)
6. Washington, DC (4%)
7. Other (7%)

*How long have you lived in the Mid-Atlantic region?*

1. 0-2 years (7%)
2. 3-5 years (1%)
3. 6-10 years (3%)
4. 11-15 years (9%)
5. 16-20 years (6%)
6. More than 20 years (72%)
7. NA (3%)

*Which kind of organization are you from?*

1. Education/Research (15%)
2. Environmental/Conservation (31%)
3. Fishing (7%)
4. Government, Federal (12%)
5. Government, Local and State (25%)
6. Industry (7%)
7. Recreational (0%)
8. Other (3%)

*Are you here as an individual or representing an organization?*

1. Individual (8%)
2. Organization (92%)

*In your work, how involved have you been with ocean issues?*

1. Very involved (55%)
2. Involved (14%)
3. Somewhat involved (22%)
4. Not very involved (9%)
5. Not at all involved (0%)

*In your work, how involved have you been with regional collaboration on ocean issues?*

1. Very involved (24%)
2. Involved (28%)
3. Somewhat involved (23%)
4. Not very involved (18%)
5. Not at all involved (6%)

*With which of the following issues are you or your organization most concerned?*

1. Climate Change Adaptation (5%)
2. Habitat Protection (17%)
3. Off Shore Renewable Energy (17%)
4. Water Quality (22%)
5. I just can't choose: All the above (35%)
6. Other (3%)

5. Create stronger, lasting partnerships among stakeholder interests across the region and identify steps that may be taken to continue to engage stakeholders.

### Hopes for the Conference

At the start of the first day, participants shared what they hoped to achieve during the conference:

- Understand the overall MARCO agenda and where the states stand on regional issues
- Identify partners to collaborate toward advancing ocean governance / MARCO agenda
- Build a consensus among stakeholders on ocean issues
- Identify data gaps; fill them to build the foundation for science-based management
- Formulate ideas and regional goals for MSP
- Understand how to better support MARCO organizational commitments; leverage partnerships to ensure implementation occurs
- Identify and define roles & responsibilities, funding, and other resources
- Understand what actions my organization can take to support the MARCO agenda
- Leverage resources for implementation
- Develop a legislative action plan
- Ensure stakeholder voice is considered and incorporated into MARCO actions – keep it real



### Opportunities and Challenges

After learning about the four priority areas identified by MARCO, participants discussed regional opportunities and challenges.

#### Water Quality

##### Opportunities

1. Linking water quality to habitat restoration and protection: sea grass and shellfish beds (53%)
2. Redefining standards and indicators to include both human and biological health criteria (41%)
3. Using federal stimulus funds, market-based solutions, and financial incentives to improve storm water and waste water management and infrastructure (35%)
4. MARCO actions: legislation, public educational opportunities, influence state coordination, link stakeholders, data sharing, build capacity, portal for information sharing, leverage resources (28%)
5. Building shared regional priorities, networks, and partnerships (27%)
6. New and available technology to measure, report, and share data (26%)

##### Challenges

1. Effectively addressing threats such as invasives, sea level rise, and marine debris (plastics); aging sewerage systems and CSOs to coastal and ocean water quality (46%)
2. Addressing lagoon and coastal bays as well as ocean waters and land-based sources of pollution to them (36%)
3. Enforcement of water quality regulations; use of existing authorities (32%)
4. Building capacity/consensus locally for smart devel. (even housing) and infrastructure changes (32%)
5. Better and more consistent monitoring, assessment, data collection and analysis (site specific and regional) (29%)
6. Adequate funding and prioritizing projects for funding (27%)
7. Redefining standards and indicators to include both human and biological health criteria (24%)
8. Addressing new and recurring threats: biomedical, salt-water intrusion into coastal waters, dredged material disposal (20%)
9. So many “nay-sayers”: how to educate, influence, increase understanding – also changing behavior to lessen individual impacts on water quality (16%)
10. Determining who actually controls threats to water quality (e.g. atmospheric deposition) (13%)

#### Climate Change Adaptation

##### Opportunities

1. Provides an opportunity to update policies and make changes to support low impact development (i.e. transit and coastal development) (39%)

2. Opportunity for states to learn from each other's "best management practices" or enact common laws to harmonize the region and collectively govern the Mid-Atlantic (39%)
3. New opportunity to acquire funding for water quality infrastructure, land and water conservation, etc. (38%)
4. Opportunity to fill / address regional data needs or models consistently across the region (34%)
5. Develop common regional message to educate stakeholders and provide opportunities for new and existing partnerships (i.e. collaboration between military, universities, economists, etc.) (30%)

#### Challenges

1. Current planning and policy promote short term decisions that ignore future problems (44%)
2. Improving proactive planning to avoid and minimize any future impacts of sea level rise – reduce overdevelopment of high risk areas (42%)
3. Lack of education and understanding is reducing public support for action (36%)
4. Balancing the protection of the built environment vs. protecting natural resources (34%)
5. Consider multiple impacts of climate change, not just sea level rise (temp, salinity, and ocean acidification) (33%)
6. Need to fill data gaps related to increased ocean acidification, increased ocean temp, sea level rise, etc. – need for better data (i.e. maps) (25%)
7. Complexity of adaptation requires a new level of coordination across organizations and disciplines (25%)
8. How do we prioritize and allocate limited financial resources (21%)
9. Need tools to better visualize the impacts of sea level rise (15%)

### **Off Shore Renewable Energy**

#### Opportunities

1. MSP for wind energy development will also provide data, information and support for improved habitat protection, water quality, research and monitoring (60%)
2. Unique opportunity to coordinate regional planning, technical capacity, and regional policies (41%)
3. "Offshore renewables reduce our reliance on carbon based fuels" (30%)
4. Promote new job creation and economic growth (25%)
5. Develop efficient energy supply chain regionally, rather than individual or state by state distribution (25%)
6. Regional approach can more equitably distribute new revenues (leasing, tariffs, user fees, etc.) to maximize benefits (11%)

#### Challenges

1. How to mitigate use conflicts caused by energy siting that would displace other uses (i.e. fishing industries, livelihoods, living resources/habitat, shipping) (67%)

2. MSP needs to be completed for purposes other than only wind-power siting; conservation of marine resources and habitat and fishery areas are key components (52%)
3. Permitting process needs enough resources to be dedicated to it at the federal/MMS level to expedite offshore wind (34%)
4. Need better and uniform data and mapping across the region (34%)
5. Need to consider other offshore energy, not just wind (e.g. hydrokinetic, oil, and gas) (17%)
6. Engaging stakeholders is challenging, but critical; "stakeholders want dialogue even if consensus doesn't result" (16%)
7. Better clarification of who benefits from offshore energy other than developers (i.e. jobs, revenues): "What's in it for the public?" (15%)
8. Expensive – need to understand resources needed and how to produce them domestically (11%)
9. Aesthetic issue: How far away from shore to place turbines? "NIMBY" (10%)

### **Habitat Protection**

#### Opportunities

1. New opportunities for adaptive management; learning from the successes of existing marine protected areas and developing benchmarks for success (59%)
2. Opportunities to maximize the use of existing successful federal-state programs/authorities and regulatory provisions to protect and acquire habitat (48%)
3. Opportunities to use new technologies to collect data to assess and protect ocean habitats (48%)
4. New marine spatial planning frameworks (35%)
5. Multiple users can lead to broad-based partnerships and collaborations: seeing and incorporating many perspectives (25%)
6. New and improved information sharing capabilities (23%)
7. Using and integrating local knowledge into decision-making (21%)
8. New educational opportunities (e.g. identifying flagship species) (13%)

#### Challenges

1. Managing habitat protection within other uses; managing user conflict and competing interests (44%)
2. Addressing habitat protection within the context of climate change and sea level rise (41%)
3. Prioritizing ecosystem/habitat restoration (40%)
4. Determining how much data are needed to make "good enough" management decisions; addressing gaps when they do exist (38%)
5. Including near shore habitat protection into management (28%)
6. Incorporating local knowledge; engaging and hearing the fisheries perspective (they're not here today) and coordinating with councils (23%)
7. Understanding and addressing the wind vs. habitat dilemma (16%)

8. Managing different perspectives among states and stakeholders (13%)
9. Raising awareness that the issues aren't mutually exclusive; they are all linked together (13%)
10. Research and assessment of habitat protection mechanisms on industry/commercial development and advancement (11%)

## Learnings from Day One

At the start of the second day of the conference, participants shared what they learned on the first day that was interesting or surprising:

- Positive attitude and comments about polling; hopeful that other ideas don't get lost
- Diverse interests in the region but also some common ground; "diverse views, but we all got along"
- How much people didn't know about certain issues like sea level rise
- Need to do more to reach out to certain key groups (e.g. fishing sector, ports)
- So much education to do even among ocean interests
- How passionate everyone is about ocean issues no matter what the interest is

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The next set of conversations on the second day focused on what other actions are needed to compliment the actions that have been committed to by the states.

### Water Quality

*What actions should private/non-profit organizations take?*

1. Advocate for increased funding, stronger regulations, and enforcement (59%)
2. Develop messaging and educate agencies, partners, and the broader public; inform them of "the cost of failing to take action versus the cost of action" (54%)
3. Provide monitoring to fill gaps on water quality data (25%)
4. Help broaden research to include social elements – e.g., why do people litter? (15%)
5. Build local capacity for action (universities, local government) (15%)
6. Find partnerships with new groups – e.g., industry, academia (13%)
7. Identify and promote successful partnerships as models (10%)
8. Other (3%)

*What legislation should be passed?*

1. Better address non-point sources: upland, watershed, land-use, and impacts on coastal water quality (61%)
2. Better funding, enforcement of existing legislation (42%)
3. More timely reauthorization of existing legislation to address new sources of impairments (Clean Water Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, BEACH Act) (37%)
4. Legislative support for regional organizations like MARCO (16%)
5. Add incentives tied to improving water quality (16%)
6. Provide for periodic review of water quality standards; broaden list of "pollutants" (10%)
7. Address marine debris sources (e.g., NY's water bottle bill) and tie to water quality standards (7%)
8. Other (4%)

*Over the long-term, what additional actions should be taken by the states and federal partners?*

1. Update/modernize sewer and wastewater systems (43%)
2. Work with existing groups (e.g. ocean observing groups) to develop water quality monitoring coalition to improve collection, coordination, & data management (39%)
3. Increased attention to non-point source pollution (34%)
4. Improve enforcement of existing regulations (26%)
5. Find market-based solutions to address sources of water quality impacts (22%)
6. Increased attention to near-shore water quality (13%)
7. Continue to engage stakeholders, public, and local governments and find a role for them (11%)
8. Other (0%)

### Climate Change Adaptation

*What actions should private/non-profit organizations take?*

1. Education for everyone at all levels (governors, government officials, organizations, and the public at large) (45%)
2. Identify key habitats at risk and direct protection measures (42%)
3. Provide funding for research, pilot projects, and monitoring and assessment (38%)
4. Develop a common message then advocate and lobby (31%)
5. Improve data integration to reduce redundancy (14%)
6. Provide expertise and local knowledge (13%)
7. Other (4%)

*What legislation should be passed?*

1. Remove incentives and create disincentives for developing in vulnerable areas (60%)
2. Amend building codes and regulations to consider climate change and sea level rise (31%)
3. Support integrative planning – e.g. building codes, population shifts, beach development (30%)
4. CZMA reauthorization with provisions for climate change adaptation (29%)
5. Provide incentives to conserve energy (26%)
6. Support organization of region's efforts to focus federal and state legislation (12%)
7. Other (1%)

*Over the long-term, what additional actions should be taken by the states and federal partners?*

1. Prepare long-term adaptation plans for communities (51%)
2. Re-evaluate post-storm rebuilding laws & policies (44%)
3. Establish a baseline of current conditions so we can identify shifts and impact of climate change (38%)
4. Provide enhanced coordination among diverse groups and various levels of government (32%)
5. MARCO should work with new Landscape Conservation Cooperative out of Interior (19%)
6. Other (6%)

## Off Shore Renewable Energy

*What actions should private/non-profit organizations take?*

1. Balance habitat concerns along with energy siting (35%)
2. Create opportunities for new and expanded stakeholder engagement throughout the entire process – make sure all are included, provide neutral space (34%)
3. Private industry and NGOs should play unique roles in providing data and research to support regional efforts and MSP (33%)
4. Clearly articulate cost-benefit analysis of energy sources/natural resources and incorporate into regional strategic plan (31%)
5. Education, lobbying, and advocacy (24%)
6. Emphasize energy conservation along with renewable energy (18%)
7. Serve as environmental watchdogs (13%)
8. Establish task forces to assist MARCO (7%)
9. Other (0%)

*What legislation should be passed?*

1. Provide consistency across MARCO states for regulatory programs, data collection, and standards (50%)
2. Provide for data production and stakeholder involvement before siting (36%)
3. Enact legislation that sets up funding for MSP (31%)
4. Address funding and revenue sharing issues of offshore development (27%)
5. Develop or amend policies and incentives for exploration, developments, and energy conservation (including a reduction in C-based energy) (26%)
6. Process to decommission fossil fuels as renewables develop (21%)
7. Other (3%)

*Over the long-term, what additional actions should be taken by the states and federal partners?*

1. Coordination between states on regional power and MSP issues, including inter-border transmission and connection projects (57%)
2. Assess cumulative impacts (e.g. energy load balance among communities, transmission, figure into cost-benefit, MSP for multiple needs not just energy, pre and post monitoring, mutual benefits of siting & fishing) (55%)
3. Mine existing data as available and identify gaps that exist – don't wait for the "perfect data" to make decisions (33%)
4. MARCO should collaborate with MMS state task groups (29%)
5. Accountability for MARCO "Actions" listed on the website for public tracking (12%)
6. Other (1%)

## Habitat Protection

*What actions should private/non-profit organizations take?*

1. Identify most important habitats and advocate for their protection; play an active role in marine spatial planning (54%)
2. Advocate for more resources and funding for habitat identification and protection (42%)
3. Engage local communities and user groups (e.g. commercial fishers, recreational users) to seek their knowledge of habitats and understand how habitat protection affects their activities (32%)
4. Support more research to characterize key habitats and understand the impacts of offshore activities (32%)
5. Use new approaches such as social marketing to educate and raise awareness of the public, government officials, and effected user groups on how biologically productive offshore habitats are and the importance of their protection (27%)
6. Other (0%)

*What legislation should be passed?*

1. Create a framework for marine spatial planning (35%)
2. Increase funding authorizations for habitat protection activities (29%)
3. Increase restrictions on certain activities known to damage important and vulnerable habitat types (28%)
4. Broaden ocean observing to include all data (physical, chemical, biological, other) (27%)
5. Seek greater opportunities to protect nearshore and upland habitats (20%)
6. Advocate for a specific legislative designation to protect an important habitat area (20%)
7. Recognize opportunities to protect habitat through legislation that targets specific activities (commercial fisheries, renewable energy) (16%)
8. Other (3%)

*Over the long-term, what additional actions should be taken by the states and federal partners?*

1. More research and monitoring to determine long-term impacts of offshore uses on habitats – tie to spatial planning efforts (43%)
2. Seek funding increases for habitat identification, characterization, and protection (40%)
3. Designate marine protected areas for targeted sites (31%)
4. Build capacity for action – engage user groups, managers, researchers, the public at large, to develop a shared vision for habitat protection (27%)
5. Work with fishing community to understand how MARCO's habitat protection goal relates to them (26%)
6. Standardize data collection efforts to compare relative "value" of habitats (23%)
7. Other (2%)

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## Increasing Public Awareness

*What are the opportunities and challenges for increasing public understanding and support for addressing ocean issues in our region?*

- Finding a way to convey the importance of the ocean in people's lives even when they don't live near the ocean or have limited access; "out of sight, out of mind"
- Challenge of measuring effectiveness of efforts
- Creating consistent messages across region and between states
- "Information Overload"
- Instill the value of the ocean in younger generations who have no pre-conceived ideas
- Use existing resources: aquaria, tour boats
- Launch social marketing campaign (frame message to audience, connect to everyday life, use mascots and celebrity, perhaps one issue at a time, connect with schools, use tv and new media, connect to the economy)

*What are the most important actions to take advantage of the opportunities and address these challenges?*

1. Connect the ocean to everyday life – human health, what people buy or eat, the homes they live in, jobs creation, other values (46%)
2. Work with communication specialists, education associations, institutions like aquaria, and other partners to build on existing efforts and develop a communication strategy for the region (42%)
3. Focus on visually connecting people to the ocean – e.g. find charismatic species or spokespeople to represent the ocean; compare offshore canyons to Grand Canyon (33%)
4. Develop ways to educate people at an early age: school curricula should include ocean awareness (24%)
5. Increase access to the ocean and educate non-coastal residents who visit the coastal area, such as beachgoers and tourists (17%)
6. Reach out to high level officials and non-coastal officials – ocean is not just a niche issue (14%)
7. Connect ocean stewardship as part of the "green" movement that is increasingly popular (measuring actions based on how they impact the environment) (14%)
8. Other (1%)

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## Ongoing Regional Collaboration

*What must be done to support ongoing regional collaboration to achieve the shared actions?*

- Create and share a strategy to continually bring new elected officials up to date
- Demonstrate achievements, success, and progress
- Formalize MARCO with dedicated funding, staff, and work teams – insure that MARCO survives through changing administrations

- Form smaller workgroups of stakeholders and state staff to work through greater details of actions / theme areas
- Have common goals, vision, and benchmarks across interest groups and the region
- Identify key players and build a constituency of support – e.g. "Friends of MARCO" – take advantage of interested parties and their strengths to maximize mutual benefits
- Maintain opportunities for stakeholder engagement and allow for partners to change as issues adapt – convene meetings in affordable yet central locations
- Create a user-friendly portal to share information

Who else needs to be better represented in the regional conversation and how should we bring them in?

- Other federal agencies, Congressional delegations
- Commercial industry and user groups – commercial fishing, maritime/shipping, wind energy, oil/gas, utilities, insurance industry
- Recreational users and related businesses – fishing, tourism associations, chambers of commerce, marinas
- Academic and learning institutions, associations – colleges, aquaria, educators associations
- Local governments, other state governments (e.g. Pennsylvania, Washington, DC)
- Diverse audiences – different ethnic groups, economic backgrounds
- Military
- Foundations
- On-shore groups – planning agencies, watershed associations, agriculture
- . . . and many, many more!

How would you or your organization prefer to remain involved with MARCO to advance the shared actions discussed this morning?

- Participate in MARCO Task Forces and Work Groups
- Target organization's involvement on 1 or 2 of the issues
- Sponsor meetings in each state; local meetings
- Share information through phone conferences, website, list-servs
- Provide support and advocate for MARCO and related actions, legislation
- Provide input and relevant information during the decision-making process
- Find local ways to apply the regional priorities
- ... and many good recommendations on how MARCO can help keep you involved!

## About the Summit

*This meeting was made possible by countless staff and volunteer hours, including by table facilitators and theme team members. Thank you for their generous efforts.*

*The conference was produced by AmericaSpeaks, a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in important public decisions that impact their lives.*