



MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN FORUM



Background Information MACO Ocean Forum Webinar May 19, 2020

I. MACO Structure and Framework

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (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. The purpose of MACO is to facilitate coordination and collaboration among governmental entities and stakeholders, advance regional ocean planning, and enhance the vitality of the region's ocean ecosystem and economy through increased communication. In recognition of the intersecting responsibilities for managing and using the ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic, MACO has been established as a collaborative effort to build on the responsibilities and authorities of the participants to advance regional ocean planning.

MACO is chaired by a state representative designated by the MARCO Management Board; the current chair is Kevin Hassell, Environmental Specialist at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. MACO is guided by an eight-member Steering Committee of individuals derived from the membership. In addition to the Chair, the Steering Committee includes two additional state representatives, three federal agency representatives, and one federally-recognized tribal representative, and one MAFMC representative.

[See the current list of MACO Steering Committee members.](#)

[View MACO's Framework Document](#)

II. MACO Work Groups

MACO advances its goals and objectives primarily through work groups or other collaborative processes (“work groups”). These include, but are not limited to, ongoing collaborative efforts to address actions identified in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan. The work groups have developed plans for 2020 and, if applicable, progress reports for 2019. A summary of the priorities for current work groups is below, as well as links to work plans and/or progress reports:

1. **Ocean Acidification** - In partnership with the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing System (MARACOOS), MARCO established the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Acidification Network (MACAN) in 2017. MACAN 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. For calendar year 2020, MACAN is focusing on establishing four work groups to help fill gaps in the region related to research and monitoring needs, and to develop and conduct outreach to industry members, policy-makers, and other regional stakeholders.

[View the MACAN 2020 Work Plan and 2019 Progress Report](#)

2. **Marine Debris** - For calendar year 2020, the Work Group is focusing on four activities: developing a Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) campaign to change behavior resulting in marine debris reduction at the Mid-Atlantic regional scale, with an initial focus on reducing balloon releases; conducting shoreline marine debris surveys and documenting the quantities and types of debris found; identifying steps for creating a Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Reduction Plan; and maintaining a marine debris projects inventory website.

[View the Marine Debris 2020 Work Plan and 2019 Progress Report](#)

3. **Offshore Wind Regional Collaboration** - The Offshore Wind Regional Collaboration was established in late 2019 to: (1) facilitate inter-agency information exchange; (2) develop and host periodic webinars or other outreach activities; (3) work with MARCO to develop a shared calendar of events (e.g. BOEM Information Exchanges, state activities, major activities of the other offshore wind groups); and (4) facilitate information exchange and coordination as needed with other regional offshore wind groups.

[View the Offshore Wind Regional Collaboration 2020 Work Plan](#)

4. **Non-Consumptive Recreation** - For calendar year 2020, the Non-Consumptive Recreation Work Group is focusing on three activities: (1) Finalize the development of a compiled database of states’ public recommendations for reducing or avoiding human-wildlife interactions during non-consumptive recreational activities; (2) Develop a

whitepaper that synthesizes recommendations within the database (Activity 1), and recommends regional best practices for minimizing human-wildlife interactions during non-consumptive recreational activities; and (3) Identify how the findings of the whitepaper could be incorporated into a product that would be usable by the public.

Non-Consumptive Recreation 2020 Work Plan will be available mid-May 2020 on the Work Group page of MARCO's website.

[Visit the Work Group page of MARCO's website](#)

5. **Maritime Commerce and Navigation Safety** - The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal team published four maps showing proposed anchorage grounds in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay areas and two Port Access Route Studies (PARS). One PARS extended offshore from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to Ocean City, Maryland, and the second extended from Cape Hatteras to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. A notice was published in the Federal Register encouraging the public to use the Portal to view/analyze the areas. A webinar was later held to discuss the data and how the Portal could be used to inform public input. The maps can be found by clicking on the "USCG Proposed Areas and Studies" dropdown within the Portal's Maritime theme. The Portal Team and USCG personnel are currently creating maps for a New Jersey area PARS and proposed anchorage off the coast of North Carolina.

[View Portal announcement on Chesapeake/Delaware Bay data](#)

[View Portal announcement on North Carolina PARS](#)

[More information about the Work Groups can be found on MARCO's website.](#)

III. **MARCO Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal and the Ocean Mapping Data Team**

MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal is an online toolkit and resource center that consolidates available data and enables state, federal and local users to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites, among others.

The Ocean Mapping Data Team (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.

[View the 2020 Portal Work Plan](#)

IV. MACO Stakeholder Engagement Plan

MACO's Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlines a variety of approaches it will take to work and communicate with stakeholders, partner organizations and members of the public. The plan reaffirms MACO's commitment to general principles for stakeholder engagement, including providing regular updates to stakeholders; identifying a range of engagement opportunities for stakeholders in MACO activities; and ensuring adequate stakeholder input into MACO efforts.

[View the Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#)

V. MACO Stakeholder Survey and Pre-Ocean Forum Webinar

In January 2020, MACO distributed a survey to stakeholders seeking input on what issues the organization should dedicate its attention to in the future and how to make the upcoming Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum a success. Sixty-eight people took part in the survey, with the highest percentage of participants identifying themselves as members of the public, NGOs, academic institutions or industry/business representatives.

Recurring themes that surfaced in the survey included a desire for continued progress on keeping the ocean clean, particularly regarding marine plastics; making sure offshore wind is properly researched and planned in a way that minimizes conflicts; and encouragement for continued/improved coordination among the MACO agencies and all other ocean users. MACO presented the survey results during the Pre-Ocean Forum webinar, which was open to the public and held on February 27, 2020. The webinar was recorded, and can be viewed using the link below. In addition to reviewing the survey results, the Pre-Ocean Forum webinar also included brief presentations from each work group summarizing progress updates and work plans.

[Watch Summary of Survey Results](#)

MACO continues to consider the suggestions received and ways they may be advanced through current and/or potential additional work groups. The feedback received identified stakeholder interest in the following issues for consideration for regional collaboration. These include current MACO efforts, cross-cutting issues and emerging / new opportunities for collaboration.

Current efforts:

- Marine Debris
- Offshore Wind
- Non-Consumptive Recreation
- Maritime Commerce and Navigation
- Ocean Acidification

Cross-cuts

- Ocean geospatial data
- Stakeholder engagement
- Science and Research

Emerging / New Opportunities

- Ocean habitats and special areas, including artificial reefs
- Restoration of damaged ocean areas/habitats
- Healthy ocean wildlife, including marine mammals
- Research on important recreational and commercial fisheries
- Improved ocean health and ocean water quality
- Climate driven ocean changes
- Ocean health indicators
- Offshore sand resources, coastal restoration and resilience
- Aquaculture

Discussions on these and other input topics will be carried forward at the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum and other engagement venues throughout the year. In addition to the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum, described below, other methods for involvement and outreach covered in the plan include webinars and conference calls by MACO leadership, engagement through its standing work groups, and the use of digital platforms for sharing news/updates and collecting feedback.

VI. 2020 Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum

MACO's stakeholder engagement plan includes the planning and delivery of an annual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum as resources allow, which is open to the public.

The goals of the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum are to:

1. Generate a greater awareness of future regional ocean policy issues and activities; and
2. Review MACO collaboration efforts in addressing regional issues and seek stakeholder input on further collaboration needs and opportunities.

Under normal circumstances, the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum would be held in-person in one of the five Mid-Atlantic states. However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum is now being held on a virtual platform. The virtual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum will be held on May 19, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. EST. The structure of the webinar will allow for interactive engagement opportunities foster communication between presenters and attendees.

[View the 2020 Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum Agenda](#)