



— The Third Annual —

MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN FORUM

Watch Videos from the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO) thanks the hundreds of participants who helped make the third annual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum a success. Videos featuring nearly a dozen sessions and 60 expert speakers from throughout the four-day event can now be viewed online.

[VIEW FORUM VIDEOS](#)

Held virtually from May 3-6, the Forum featured panel discussions on ocean planning issues including offshore wind energy in the Mid-Atlantic, climate-induced ocean changes, ocean justice, and emerging technologies for monitoring the ocean. The event also featured opportunities for public participation ([click here](#) for agenda) and a poster session highlighting the work of students from throughout the region ([click here](#) to view poster files and video).

Reflecting on the week’s discussions during the closing plenary (see video below), incoming MACO Chair and New York Department of State Ocean and Great Lakes Program Manager Michael Snyder noted that one of his top priorities will be to continue expanding collaborations on ocean planning.

“We have a tremendous infrastructure in MACO and a partnership network that has been the basis of a lot of good work,” Snyder said. “What has really been reinforced to me these last few days has been the need to expand our thinking on who we engage with and how we engage with others and how we build our capacity to address these challenges.”



In a tribal blessing that kicked off the event, Chickahominy Indian Tribe Chief Stephen R. Adkins wished the participants success, noting, “It’s really heart-warming to see this kind of initiative around protecting Mother Earth and preserving it for future generations.” Among the speakers in the subsequent opening plenary (video below) was Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Director Amanda Lefton, who relayed recent steps by the Biden Administration to pause new offshore oil and gas leases and advance the nation’s transition to renewable energy sources, including through an expansion of offshore wind energy leasing in the New York Bight.

“The wind energy areas are adjacent to the greater tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, which is home to more than 20 million people,” Lefton said. “It’s the largest population center in the United States, so ensuring that there’s renewable energy close to that area is of course critical to the future of our nation’s transition.”



The Forum saw an extended discussion on the importance and means for achieving ocean equity and justice. Attendees were provided an opportunity to join breakout sessions for open dialogues centered on what ocean justice means in the context of science priorities and research, community engagement and outreach, or equitable benefits from ocean resources.

“Part of the work here, both in ocean planning and how it works, is that it’s really important to have every voice at the table,” said Whitney Tome, principal at the Raben Group and moderator of the panel. “And what I mean by that is not just, ‘Oh, do I have a representative from that group?’ but are they deeply embedded in the decision-making process? Do they help design the process? Do they help implement and are they taken care of in that process?”

Additional sessions featured in-depth discussions on technologies that can be used to understand changes species are experiencing in the marine environment and policies, data and tools that can be used to support ocean planning.

Next Steps & Getting Involved

MACO is evaluating the recommendations that emerged during the Forum and how they may be incorporated into its work. It has already begun scoping some proposals and future steps, including:

- MACO would like to establish a work group to focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) to expand its current roster of participants and pursue actions related to MACO’s [DEIJ statement](#).
- Based on significant interest in ocean conservation, MACO will explore establishing a work group focused on conservation and ecological issues, which would align with some of the recommendations in the [Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan](#) related to healthy ocean ecosystems and current interest in climate impacts and

marine protection and restoration.

- Due to significant interest in maritime commerce and navigation safety, MACO intends to expand the scope and membership of its existing work group.
- Broad-based stakeholder engagement is important and MACO has asked individual work groups to consider how to engage additional partners and diverse perspectives and experience in our efforts.

MACO encourages interested stakeholders to become involved with its [work groups](#). It currently administers work groups focused on marine debris, ocean acidification, non-consumptive recreation, offshore renewable energy, and maritime commerce and navigation safety. It also plays a prominent role in a Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean-led ocean mapping and data team. To learn more, email info@midatlanticocean.org.

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean 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, and federally recognized tribes, and to engage stakeholders. The purpose of MACO is to enhance the vitality of the region's ocean ecosystem and economy through increased communication and collaboration.