



— *The Fourth Annual* —

# MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN FORUM

The Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO) thanks the many partners and participants who helped make the fourth annual Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum a success. Videos featuring the sessions and expert speakers from the two-day event can now be viewed online.

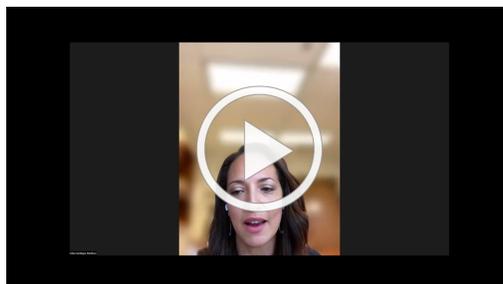
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Held virtually from May 5-6, the Forum featured plenary sessions, presentations and panel discussions on blue carbon as a climate change mitigation strategy, sustainable ocean ecosystems, and planning for sustainable ocean economies. For the first time, pre-recorded presentations were available on demand prior to and during the Forum. ([Watch ON-DEMAND PRESENTATIONS](#)). A poster session highlighted the work of students from throughout the region. ([See the POSTERS](#)).

Kimberly Cole, Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) Chair, and Mike Snyder, Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO) Chair, welcomed the participants and provided opening remarks.

Keynote speaker Kisha Santiago-Martinez, Deputy Secretary of State, New York State Department of State, gave a compelling speech that urged attendees to build on MACO's regional efforts, expand partnerships and work together on complex issues surrounding overlapping ocean uses, and work collaboratively across different disciplines and agencies to act now in the face of climate change impacts.

"In the limited time we have on earth to focus on climate change, open the discussion to include voices not traditionally heard. Broaden the circle to include the voices needed to move from conversation to implementation," Santiago-Martinez said.



The *Blue Carbon as a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy* session examined carbon storage in wetlands as a mitigation strategy to climate change and tools being developed for improved decision-making. There was interest in exploring the viability of private carbon credit programs to fund wetland/SAV restoration and in research to help

understand the tradeoffs in marsh migration areas.

Presentations in the *Sustainable Ocean Ecosystems* session included future projections for ocean planning, conservation aquaculture, community-level modeling, conservation priorities of the Biden Administration and data available on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal. In the breakout sessions which followed, participants were asked to provide input on the potential for forming a MACO ocean conservation work group to share information among ocean users and to use science to guide decisions about conservation. MACO plans to synthesize the information collected during these sessions and the Forum to inform future efforts.



On Day 2, Deerin Babb-Brott, Principal Assistant Director for Oceans and Environment, White House Office of Science & Technology Policy, kicked off the Forum sessions focused on planning for Sustainable Ocean Economies. He encouraged MACO and MARCO to leverage its ocean and coastal management experience and current regional efforts to inform the National Strategy for a Sustainable Ocean Economy which is currently under development.

The *Planning for Sustainable Ocean Economies* session consisted of two panels: *Accommodating future demands for ocean space to sustain port access and maritime navigation* and *Offshore Wind: Community impacts, transmission, supply chain, infrastructure support and economic opportunities*.

Panelists representing the United States Coast Guard, Chamber of Shipping of America and the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal discussed the future demands on ocean space including offshore wind, port access and the related navigation safety concerns. Panelists expressed a strong need for regional collaboration and effective communication and engagement by offshore wind developers, shipping companies, ports, U.S. Coast Guard and impacted stakeholders regarding their needs and plans to improve management of ocean space and resources.

Landside impacts of offshore wind were presented by panelists from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, the Port of Virginia, and the American Clean Power Association. Some of the impacts will require planning efficient transmission routes to minimize environmental impact and ratepayer cost, investing resources in additional capacity for ports and workforce development for new technology, and preparing now for increased demand on permitting processes, agency resources, and the supply chain. Broad public input and regional collaboration will be critical to minimizing impacts and identifying areas for economic growth.



The Closing Plenary panel offered perspectives from a range of Forum participants on next steps in ocean planning for MACO. Snyder noted that one of his top priorities as MACO Chair has been to broaden the engagement on ocean issues, to strengthen current

partnerships and develop new ones to include voices outside the MACO echo chamber.

“We need to better communicate what we do, convey a sense of urgency, and show people the connection between ocean planning and the rest of the world that benefits from your participation,” he said.

Cole closed the Fourth Annual Ocean Forum with thanks to the participants for sharing their passion for the ocean.

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

[VIEW FORUM VIDEOS, AGENDA, SLIDES](#)

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*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.*

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