

MARCO

MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL
COUNCIL ON THE OCEAN

MID-ATLANTIC
COMMITTEE
ON THE OCEAN

Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum

Sustainable Ocean Ecosystems Session May 5, 2022 1:00 – 3:25pm

Should MACO Create an Ocean Conservation Work Group?

Laura McKay, Virginia CZM Program Manager/MARCO Board Member



2009: MARCO's Regional Priorities

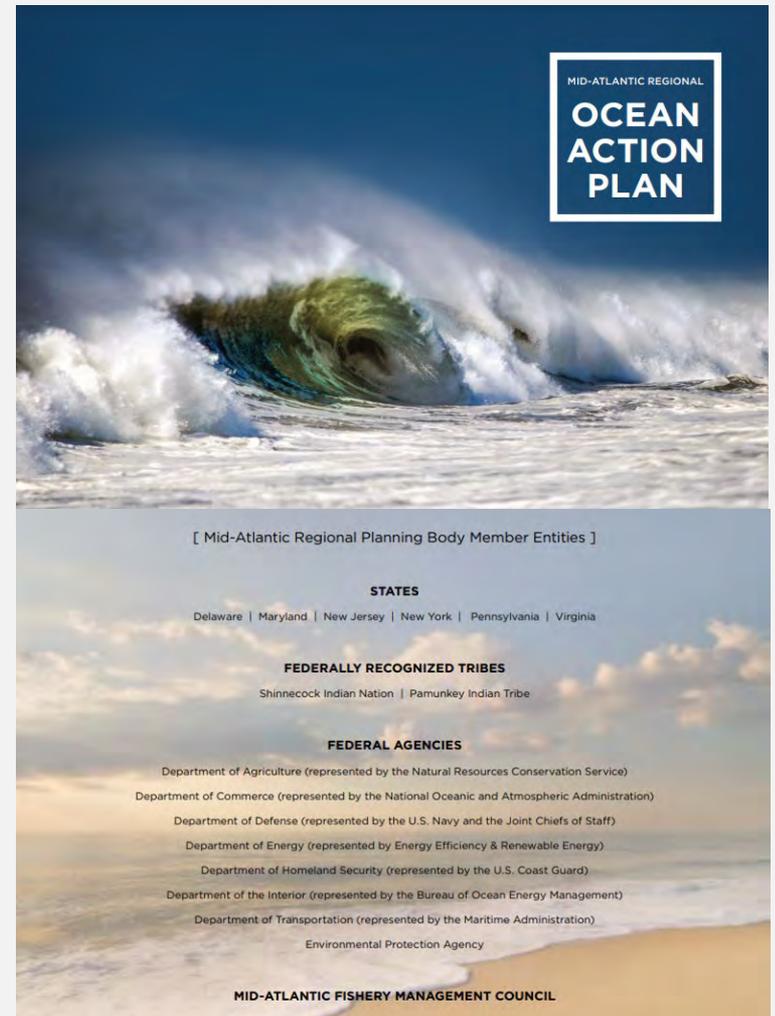
1. Preparing for impacts of *climate change* on ocean
2. Coordinating protection of *marine habitats*
3. Supporting sustainable development of *offshore renewable energy*
4. Promoting improvements in ocean *water quality*



2016: Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body's Ocean Action Plan (OAP)

Two Primary Goals:

1. “Promote ocean ecosystem health, functionality, and integrity through conservation, protection, enhancement and restoration.”
2. “Plan and provide for existing and emerging ocean uses in a sustainable manner that minimizes conflict, improves effectiveness and regulatory predictability and supports economic growth.”



Goal 1 Healthy Ocean Ecosystem: 6 Actions

1. Identify & assess Ecologically Rich Areas (ERAs): *stalled*
2. Map shifts in species due to climate change: *underway*
3. Develop a Mid-A ocean acidification monitoring network: *underway –via MACAN*
4. Develop a regionally appropriate marine debris strategy: *completed via Marine Debris Work Group*
5. Develop and publish indicators of ocean health: *stalled*
6. Incorporate traditional knowledge of ocean health in ocean planning: *underway?*



THIS
SEA TURTLE
THOUGHT SHE
SWALLOWED
FOOD
NOT A
BALLOON.



RELEASED BALLOONS CAN HARM WILDLIFE.



PLEDGE NOT TO RELEASE BALLOONS!

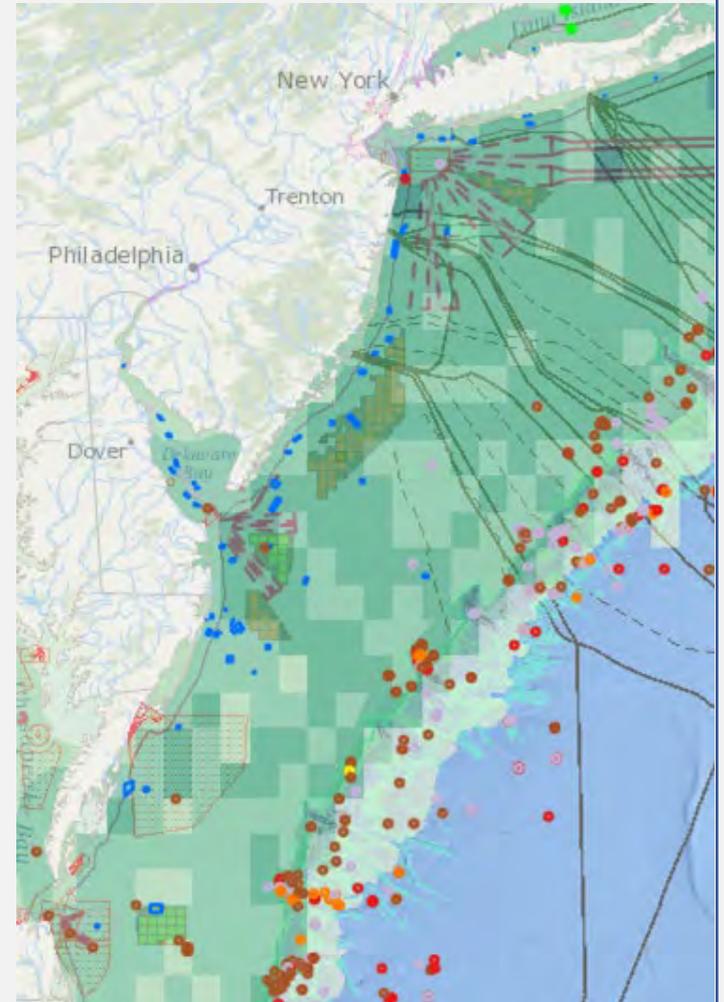


Steps for Action #1:

Identifying & Assessing Ecologically Rich Areas

1. Define components of ecologically rich areas (e.g. **high productivity, biodiversity, abundance, vulnerability, rarity**) Areas may also be fixed, clustered, ephemeral or dynamic/ambulatory
2. Define specific thresholds for meeting the components
3. Map all ERAs and create fact sheets
4. Identify criteria for choosing and choose a pilot area on which to begin an assessment
5. Assess pilot area for health trends, overlay human uses and identify relevant regulatory agencies and current management practices
6. Publish an assessment report
7. Evaluate the process, adjust as needed
8. Proceed with assessment of next area.

Note: all steps were to be taken with transparency and involvement of stakeholders and data continually updated. See Appendix 4 of the Plan for a draft framework for identifying ERA's



OAP Additional Actions

1. Identify and prioritize applied science and research needs: *underway –via MARCO/NROC “Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative”*
2. Implement best practices to enhance coordination and use of portal data: *underway via Ocean Mapping & Data Team*
3. Evaluate management options under the CZMA: *stalled*
4. Develop an OAP performance and monitoring evaluation plan: *stalled*



2017: MACO Goals & Groups

MACO'S GOALS

- Provide a venue for ongoing regional information sharing and coordination about the Mid-Atlantic's Ocean ecosystem and economy;
- Generate a deeper understanding and awareness of state, federal, tribal and regional fisheries management entities' programs and other activities affecting ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic;
- Identify and pursue, where appropriate, opportunities for collaboration on regional ocean issues;
- Generate and maintain a list of contacts engaged in ocean planning to facilitate communication across the region;
- Identify ways to enhance federal data sharing and support for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal to inform ocean planning and management; and
- Engage stakeholders in learning about, identifying and responding to regional ocean issues.

Current MARCO & MACO Work Groups:

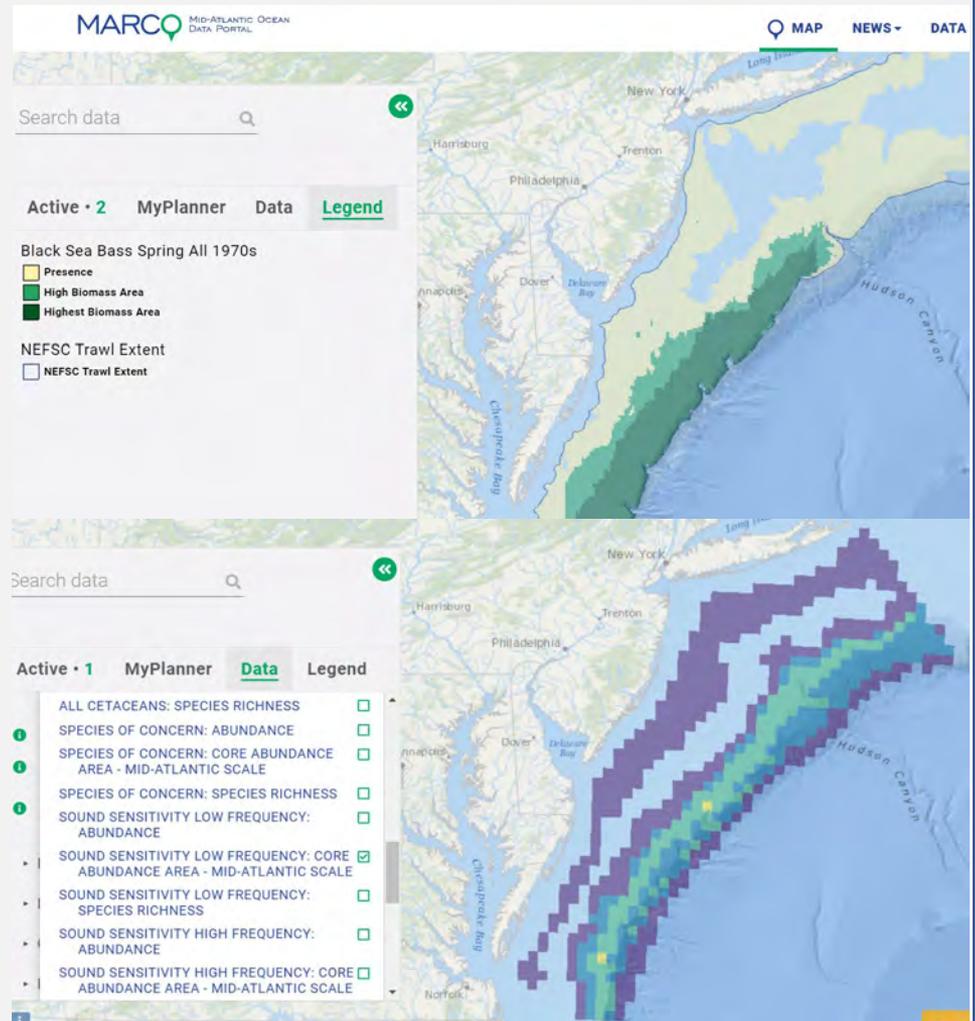
- Ocean Mapping & Data Team
- Marine Debris
- Mid-A Coastal Acidification Network
- Non-consumptive Recreation
- Offshore Wind Regional Collaborative

Other Activities Since 2017

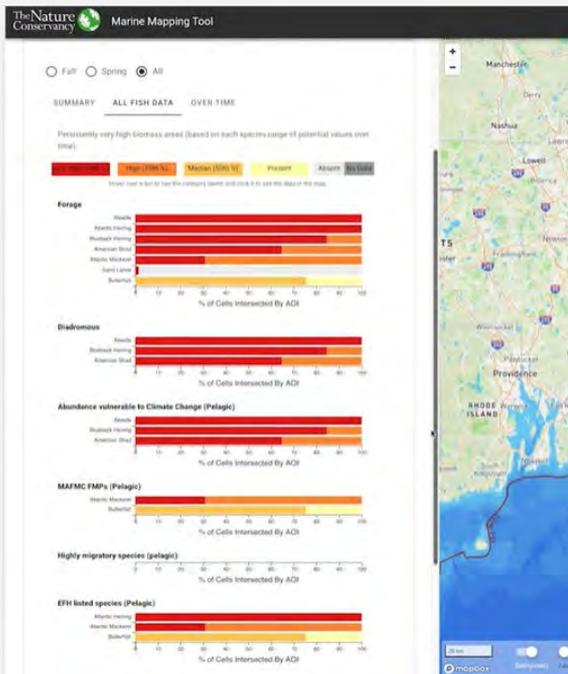
- Fish Species through Time 1970's – 2010's and Future Projections

- Marine Life Updates

- Regional Ocean Science Alliance



Other Recent Activities



Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative

The Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind (RWSC) was cooperatively established and is led by four Sectors – federal agencies, states, eNGOs, and the offshore wind industry. The RWSC supports research and monitoring on wildlife and offshore wind by:

- Identifying priorities for scientific research and monitoring at the project, regional and ecosystem-wide scales
- Coordinating and aligning funding to meeting those priorities
- Ensuring appropriate data and standards are in place to support science priorities

Updates

[Join the RWSC Mailing List to receive updates](#)

- April 5, 2022:** RWSC is now the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind
- January 7, 2022:** Collaborative funding for continued visual Aerial Megafauna Surveys in southern New England Wind Energy Areas

Integrated Science Plan for Offshore Wind and Wildlife – under development by the RWSC Subcommittees:

View the draft [Ongoing & Pending Offshore Wind & Wildlife Research Database](#) (and email us to add research projects)

- Marine Mammals – access materials [here](#)
- Sea Turtles – access materials [here](#)
- Birds and Bats – access materials [here](#)
- Protected Fish Species – TBD
- Habitat and Ecosystem – TBD
- Cross-taxa / cross-cutting – TBD



Year One Report America the Beautiful

December 2021

An update on progress made to support locally led conservation and restoration efforts across the country during the first year of the America the Beautiful initiative

- TNC's Wind Siting Tool
- Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative
- 30 x 30 Goal (conserve 30% of land and water by 2030)



Next Steps



Should MACO Form an **Ocean Conservation Work Group**?

- What **outcomes** would we want to see from a new ocean conservation work group?
- What science-based **products or tools** could the group develop that would support marine conservation for sustainable and healthy ocean ecosystems?
- What would a **successful work group collaboration** look like? How could we use an ocean conservation work group to strengthen partnerships and connections?
- What could an ocean conservation work group do to **advance our conservation priorities** with our partners?