



# 2023 Ocean Conservation Work Group Work Plan and Progress Report

**Reporting Period:**

**Work Group Webpage:** <https://www.midatlanticocean.org/ocean-planning/work-groups-collaborative-efforts/>

**Work Group Lead:** Laura McKay (VA) and Kevin Hassell (NJ)

**Work Group Members:** Work Group membership is open to government and non-governmental entities operating in the 5 Mid-Atlantic states that are willing to participate in the activities of the work group. Members are expected to contribute on monthly work group calls and assist with implementation of projects.

**Current Members Include:**

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Blair	Devon	New Jersey DEP
Bristow	Avalon	MARCO
Camhi	Merry	Wildlife Conservation Society (NY)
Chesnin	Noah	Wildlife Conservation Society (NY)
Coakley	Jessica	MAFMC
Greenfield	Brent	National Ocean Policy Coalition
Haight	Terra	NY DOS
Hansen	Deena	BOEM
Hassell	Kevin	NJ DEP
Hogan	LeAnn	NOAA
Lieske	Kristi	DE NREC

MacDonald	Tony	<b>MACO/Monmouth</b>
McKay	Laura	<b>VA CZM</b>
Odell	Jay	<b>MACO/Monmouth</b>
Vilacoba	Karl	<b>MACO/Monmouth</b>

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**Work Group Goals, Objectives and Actions:** This work builds on Healthy Ocean Ecosystem Actions 1, 2 and 6 of the 2016 Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan:

Action 1: Identify ecologically rich areas of the ocean in the Mid-Atlantic region and increase understanding of those areas to foster more informed decision making. (p. 40)

Action 2: Map shifts in ocean species and habitats. (p. 41)

Action 6: Incorporate Traditional Knowledge of Tribes regarding ocean health in regional ocean planning in the Mid-Atlantic. (p.44)

**ACTIVITY 1 - Provide a Forum**

**Expected Completion Date:** Ongoing

- In 2023 define the realm of ocean conservation this work group will address and how climate change and other drivers will affect this work.
- Sponsor at least three webinars, covering topics such as marine sanctuaries, the state of knowledge on causes of marine mammal strandings, RWSC’s draft Integrated Science Plan for Offshore Wind & Wildlife, understanding workforce development opportunities in monitoring ocean wildlife and carbon dioxide removal and effects on wildlife.

**A1 Progress Description:** January - June 2023

**A1 Progress Description:** July - December 2023

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**ACTIVITY 2 - Increase Community Engagement**

**Expected Completion Date:** Ongoing

In 2023 the work group will:

- Create content for MARCO’s webpage about this work group with assistance from the Communications Team.

- Investigate ways to build stronger connections among stakeholders. Work across different groups to connect them to the common goal of ocean conservation.
- Establish a regular means of communication to facilitate discussion among various groups with various expertise and needs. This could include
  - online blogs or listservs to connect with underserved communities and technical experts in each state.
  - Develop ocean wildlife or ocean conservation Storymap(s) for the portal
- Provide stipends to allow members of underserved communities to attend the May Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum. MARCO has funding to do this.
- Investigate avenues for reaching Mid-Atlantic Tribes in collaboration with Tribal Rep on the MACO Steering Committee and MARCO's contractor on Tribal Relations.

**A2 Progress Description:** January - June 2023

**A1 Progress Description:** July - December 2023

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### **ACTIVITY 3 - Assist with the 30 X 30 Goal to Conserve 30% of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean by 2030**

**Expected Completion Date:** December 2023

- In collaboration with the Portal Team, the work group will create a mechanism in the Ocean Data Portal that helps the general public understand where species abundance, biodiversity, etc. are greatest by:
  - Reviewing all available data layers on the portal.
  - Conferring with relevant experts.
  - Clearly documenting the synthesis process.
- The work group will work with the Ocean Mapping and Data Team and the Portal Technical Teams to define what a conservation theme encompasses. Initial ideas proposed by the work group for consideration include:
  - Existing and planned conservation areas
  - Space for public comments on proposed areas for conservation - some of which may come out of the 30 x 30 effort.
  - An ocean wildlife conservation theme for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal.
  - Grouped layers related to ocean wildlife conservation theme to best depict areas with the highest abundance and diversity of seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, fishes, and corals.

- Assist with accurate messaging about activities that can and cannot take place in Marine Sanctuaries and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs)
- Identify and cross-reference in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal other portals that address the ocean conservation topic; e.g., [Save Our Seas](#), MMC, [America the Beautiful Atlas](#), etc.
- Investigate innovative methods to achieve ocean conservation goals

**A3 Progress Description:** January - June 2023

**A3 Progress Description:** July - December 2023

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