

Volunteer to Help!

To learn more or volunteer, contact:

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The ocean is getting more and more crowded every day. The Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) has been working to map ocean activities, including commercial fishing, submarine cables, coastwise travel, aquaculture, and party and charter boats. Charting the spatial uses of the ocean helps ocean managers better characterize and understand where long-standing—as well as new—ocean uses occur. Understanding this information represents a critical step in ensuring that new ocean uses do not displace current users, such as party/charter vessels.

Looking for Volunteers to Use Mapping Application in 2015

The RPB is looking for volunteers to use an electronic mapping application in 2015. The increasing use and sophistication of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology on vessels and in computers and mobile devices allows very accurate location information. The Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association, the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, and Harbor Light Software, LLC, have developed two applications for mobile devices that allow electronic reporting of fish catch and fishing location.

Ocean planning staff would like to find six to ten captains throughout New England to test this technology for ease of use. The captains will receive tablets with the apps installed for the 2015 fishing season, as well as training on how to use the system. Data results will be discussed with captains to identify lessons learned and opportunities for future expansion of this pilot project.

What Does the App Record?

The app's location tracking function—which can be turned off—shows a vessel's spatial use patterns over time, recording fishing and transit activity. Captains can also log individual trips, fish catches, and other data. Captain Rick Bellavance, President of the Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association and a member of the Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council, used the software last season. Examples from Captain Rick are shown at left.

Protecting Fishing Locations

A captain's stock in trade is getting clients to locations that provide a successful fishing experience. This mapping project focuses on relatively broad spatial use patterns, rather than exact locations. To that end, the location recording function can be generalized (made less specific) to a spatial resolution of 100 feet (30 meters) to protect the exact locations of fishing activity.

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