

## **Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB)**

### **Draft Work Plan for RPB Deliberation – June 3-4, 2015**

*This work plan is specific to RPB activities that advance the development of draft plan content through the next RPB meeting in November 2015 (a general timeline extending through 2016 will be provided as context). Therefore, it relates directly to Sections 2-4 of the draft plan outline. Each of these subjects and related tasks will be discussed during the June 3-4 RPB meeting and the RPB will be asked to adopt or modify this work plan based on deliberations and public comment during the meeting.*

## **Section 2 of the Draft Plan Outline**

**Task 1: Develop maps and related draft plan information identifying important areas for marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, and fish. Develop draft agency guidance regarding the use of those products under specific regulatory authorities. Consider long term maintenance of priority datasets, including the identification of science and research priorities.**

- a) Ocean planning staff, MDAT<sup>1</sup>, and agency staff (see table below) will determine the appropriate methodology, review and consider the efficacy of draft products, draft guidance to other agencies and the public stating how these products will be used, consider long term maintenance and updates, and identify science and research priorities.

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Primary Authorities<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Agency</b>
Cetaceans, sea turtles, and fish	ESA, MMPA	NOAA-NMFS Protected Resources Division
Birds	MBTA, ESA, FWCA	USFWS
Fish habitat	Magnuson, FWCA	NOAA-NMFS Habitat Conservation Division
Fishery resources	Magnuson, FWCA	NOAA-NMFS Habitat Conservation Division & NOAA-NEFSC

- b) Ocean planning staff and MDAT will meet at least once with other federal agencies (USACE, BOEM, EPA, Navy, DOE, FERC) to review progress and consider developing internal/external guidance for the use of plan information in permitting and leasing. This will be coordinated through the *Regulatory Work Group*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> MDAT is the Marine Life Data and Analysis Team composed of the Duke Marine Geospatial Laboratory, NOAA National Center for Coastal Ocean Science, and the Ecosystem Assessment Program at the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center

<sup>2</sup> Endangered Species Act (ESA), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA), Magnuson-Stevens Act (Magnuson)

<sup>3</sup> The *Regulatory Work Group* will continue to be the central coordinating group for tasks 1, 2, 4b-4f, and 5

- c) Ocean planning staff and MDAT will meet at least once with each coastal New England state (CT, RI, MA, NH, ME) and possibly NY to ensure coordination with related state data analyses, regulatory authorities, and planning efforts. This will be coordinated through the *Regulatory Work Group*.
- d) Ocean planning staff and MDAT will meet at least once with the Tribes to review draft products.
- e) Utilize expert work groups (fish, birds, marine mammals) as necessary to review draft products and inform methodologies.

**Task 2: Develop maps and related draft plan information identifying important management and use areas for commercial fishing, recreation, and the marine transportation system. Develop draft agency guidance regarding the use of those products under specific regulatory authorities. Consider long term maintenance of priority datasets, including identification of science and research priorities.**

- a) Ocean planning staff, contractors, USCG, USDOT (MARAD), and NOAA will determine the appropriate methodology, review and consider the efficacy of draft maps, draft guidance to other agencies and the public stating how these products will be used, consider long term maintenance and updates, and identify science and research priorities.
- b) Ocean planning staff and contractors will meet at least once with other federal agencies, (USACE, BOEM, EPA, Navy, DOE, FERC) to review progress and consider developing internal/external guidance for the use of plan information in permitting and leasing. This will be coordinated through the *Regulatory Work Group*.
- c) Ocean planning staff and contractors will meet at least once with each coastal New England state (CT, RI, MA, NH, ME) and possibly NY to ensure coordination with related state data analyses, authorities, and planning efforts. This will be coordinated through the *Regulatory Work Group*.

**Task 3: Advance a new methodology to identify important ecological areas across taxonomic groups, potentially including additional habitat and ecological considerations.**

- a) Establish a new *EBM Science Work Group*<sup>4</sup> composed of 4 RPB staff scientists and 4 academic scientists to meet at least two times between June and October to guide the MDAT project team.
- b) With input from the *EBM Science Work Group*, advance the development of regional habitat layers through NROC's Habitat Classification and Ocean Mapping Committee.

---

<sup>4</sup> The *EBM Science Work Group* will inform and support tasks 3, 6, and 7. Work group members will represent a range of scientific expertise, geographic diversity, and will have experience with ocean planning activities to date. The work group will be closely coordinated with similar efforts in the Mid-Atlantic.

- c) Ocean planning staff, MDAT, and *EBM Science Work Group* will review potential data inputs, research and select a methodology to prototype, and begin development of draft maps.
- d) Ocean planning staff and MDAT will include draft products or status updates in discussions with federal agencies and states about the potential use of these products.
- e) MDAT will provide a status update at the November RPB meeting.

#### **Task 4: Advance other components of Section 2 of the Draft Plan Outline**

- a) The *Restoration and Conservation Subcommittee*, led by USACE and EPA, will develop draft plan content and finalize map layers pursuant to the RPB decision about including regional restoration and conservation priorities in the draft plan and the NE Ocean Data Portal.
- b) The *Aquaculture Work Group* will continue to consider the use of plan data and information for likely types of aquaculture projects in federal waters (such as blue mussels). This includes the use of maps identifying important areas for marine life species and human uses, potentially developing additional criteria to identify feasible or impractical locations, and engaging the public to inform these considerations.
- c) The *Sand and Gravel Work Group* will continue to share information about sampling and mapping activities, identify sand needs, and consider the use of plan data and information.
- d) Relevant agencies (BOEM, USACE, FERC) will review existing *energy and infrastructure* maps and consider the use of plan data and information related to current and potential offshore energy and infrastructure projects.
- e) Relevant agencies (EPA, USACE, States, NOAA) will review maps and data of *submerged aquatic vegetation* (SAV), develop guidance regarding the use of plan information related to SAVs, and consider long term maintenance of these products.
- f) Tribes and relevant agencies will consider the continued development, use, and maintenance of maps and other information about *historic and cultural resources*, including developing agency guidance if appropriate.

### **Sections 3 and 4 of the Draft Plan Outline**

**Task 5: Continue developing agency guidance and best practices for pre-application that refer to the use of plan information developed in Section 2 of the draft outline, including the incorporation of information about tribal consultation and the identification of potentially affected stakeholders.**

- a) Through the *Regulatory Work Group*, agencies will continue to develop guidance regarding the use of the plan information under specific regulatory, permitting, and leasing authorities.

- b) Through the *Regulatory Work Group*, agencies, states and tribes will continue to work with ocean planning staff and contractors to review relevant sections of the pre-application template.

**Task 6: Develop options or a specific proposal for plan monitoring and evaluation, including the potential use of indicators**

- a) Ocean planning staff and contractors will organize webinars for the RPB to learn about the Ocean Health Index, NROC's Sentinel Monitoring for Climate Change, and GOMC Ecosystem Indicator Partnership (ESIP).
- b) Ocean planning staff and contractors will work the RPB to develop options or a specific proposal to be considered at the November 2015 RPB meeting for plan monitoring and evaluation. This will be informed by the *EBM Science Work Group* and will include an analysis of potential uses of plan indicators, budget and capacity to develop and maintain indicators, and the opportunities and challenges associated with each potential approach.

**Task 7: Identify Science and Research Priorities**

- a) Ocean planning staff, contractors, and agencies will aggregate priority science and research needs identified in Section 2 that will enhance information being used under existing authorities.
- b) Ocean planning staff will work with the *EBM Science Work Group* to identify additional science and research priorities, including data, data products, and additional analyses that could be conducted to advance the science of Ecosystem Based Management in the Northeast.