

2. Introduction

New England’s marine resources are an important source of economic and ecosystem value. Together with the region’s coastal infrastructure and human use, these resources are inputs to industrial, recreational, and service sector activities that support jobs and income. They also provide ecosystem services that contribute to the well-being of residents and visitors.

The Northeast Regional Planning Body (RPB) recognized the need to collect information on the region’s coastal and marine resources, infrastructure and economy to support [ocean planning in the Northeast](#). This baseline assessment compiles existing information and new analysis to characterize the region and provides guidance on how a Northeast Ocean Plan can address pressures on resources and resource use conflicts while supporting sustainable economic activity. The product is intended to provide a high level overview of current resources, conditions, and recent trends – not a historical look back in time.

To conduct this assessment, the RPB partnered with a team of researchers from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution’s Marine Policy Center, the University of Southern Maine, the University of Massachusetts Boston, and the New England Aquarium. The assessment was directed by an RPB work group consisting of the following individuals:

- Jeff Adkins, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Todd Callaghan, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
- Bruce Carlisle, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
- Michele DesAutels, United States Coast Guard
- Bob LaBelle, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- Kathleen Leyden, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry
- Chris Tompsett, United States Navy

2.1. Purpose and scope of baseline assessment

The goals of the baseline assessment are to: 1) describe the connections between natural resources, infrastructure, and economic value (broadly defined) in the region at present and in the future; and 2) provide tools and considerations to the RPB members as they develop a regional ocean plan. The assessment also identifies key gaps in data and information to consider in future planning.

Data on the region’s marine resources and economic activity are illustrated in this document with appropriate maps, figures, and tables, as well as text summaries. The Baseline Assessment also contains references and links to more detailed versions of these datasets on the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#), and to source documents and other datasets from which the Baseline Assessment data are drawn.

2.2. Resources and economic value generation

The natural coastal and marine resources of the Northeastern United States are an important source of economic and ecosystem service value. Together with the region’s coastal infrastructure and human resources, these resources are inputs to industrial,

recreational, and service sector activities that support jobs and income in the region. They also have intrinsic value and are a source of ecosystem services that contribute to the well-being of residents and visitors.

With rising population in the region's coastal areas, a growing range and intensity of human uses of coastal and marine resources, and evidence of climate change effects, pressures on natural marine resources and conflicts over their use have increased and are likely to continue to increase. In response to this, the NE RPB has adopted supporting healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems, effective decision making, and compatibility of past, current, and future ocean uses as the three overarching goals for ocean planning in the Northeast. The purpose of this baseline assessment is to support the RPB in the pursuit of these goals, by characterizing the region's ecosystem, economy, and cultural resources, highlighting the important connections between natural resources and the economy, and suggesting how a regional ocean plan can address pressures on resources, manage resource use conflicts, and support sustainable economic activity in the Northeast.

Ocean planning decisions can influence the health and availability of marine natural resources to market- and non-market value generation in the future. Ocean planning decisions will therefore influence the future path of development of the region's marine economy and the provision of ecosystem services. By understanding the connections between natural resources and economic value (broadly defined) in the Region at present and in the future, the baseline assessment seeks to inform and support the development of a regional ocean plan.

2.3. Geography of the Northeast Region

The Northeast region comprises the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and the adjacent coastal waters, including parts of the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, the shelf waters from Cape Cod to the New York Bight, and Long Island Sound. The two major marine areas of the Northeast are the Gulf of Maine north of Cape Cod, and the New York Bight and Long Island Sound south and west of Cape Cod (Figure 1). For purposes of this baseline assessment, to provide information relevant to planning for Northeast ocean waters, we include data from all coastal counties in the Northeast states, plus five coastal counties in New York state that border on Long Island Sound.

NOTE: The map images shown in this document are intended to give a large-scale view of resources, infrastructure, and economic activity in the Northeast as a whole. Of necessity, many of them cannot show the detail needed to identify features at the local scale. The information on which these map images are based, and much other information useful to regional ocean planning, is available at smaller-scale resolution via the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#). Readers who wish to explore data at higher resolution are encouraged to use the Data Portal.

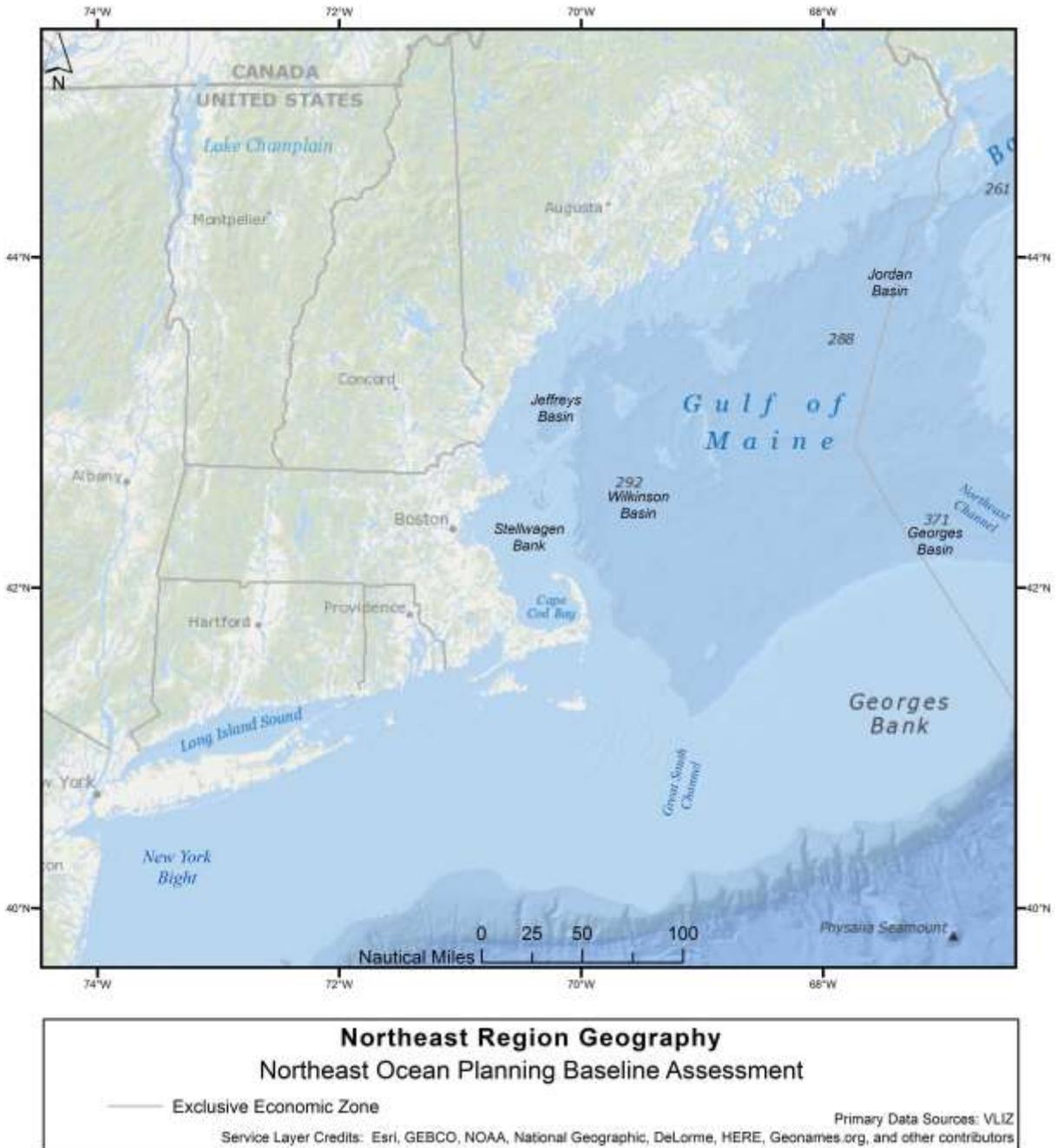


Figure 1 Northeast region geography