



MID-ATLANTIC OCEAN DATA PORTAL

RESOURCES FOR
REGIONAL OCEAN PLANNING

A wide-angle photograph of the ocean at sunset. In the center-left, a fishing boat with its nets deployed is visible. To the right, a large, dark navigational buoy stands in the water. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, reflecting on the calm sea.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the MARCO Portal?

The MARCO Portal is an online toolkit and resource center to engage stakeholders in ocean planning in the five-state Mid-Atlantic region. The Portal consolidates available data and enables state, federal and local users to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites, among others. By putting all of the essential data and state-of-the art mapping and visualization technology into the hands of regional leaders, they can make the best decisions about ocean use.

What is MARCO?

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) is a collaboration among the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia for managing ocean resources to improve ocean health and ensure the waters off the Mid-Atlantic continue to contribute to the region's quality of life and economic vitality. MARCO was formed in 2009 through an agreement by the governors of the five states to:

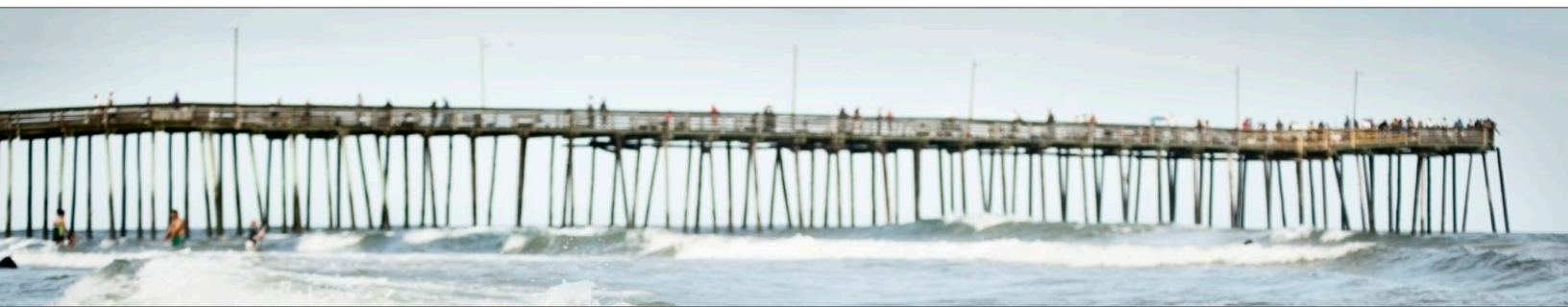
- Support the sustainable development of renewable offshore energy to make the Mid-Atlantic more self-reliant and economically stable;
- Identify and protect important offshore habitats that are critical to sustaining seafood, tourism opportunities, and other job-creating benefits;
- Prepare coastal communities for regional climate change impacts;
- Improve the region's water quality to sustain seafood, tourism and ocean health, and
- Build capacity for regional ocean planning that will help maximize our Mid-Atlantic economy and our ocean's ecological health.

Why was the MARCO Portal developed?

The Portal supports MARCO's commitment to a comprehensive regional approach to ocean planning and management. The Portal also addresses the call of the U.S. National Ocean Policy (2010) for regional ocean planning supported by a robust ocean data and information management system that includes a wide range of human use, environmental, socio-economic, and regulatory data. The Portal engages all ocean stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region and puts all of the essential data and state-of-the art mapping and visualization technology into the hands of the agencies, industry, and community leaders involved in ocean planning.

What are key features of the MARCO Portal?

The two main features of the Portal are an extensive Data Catalog and Marine Planner, a state of the art mapping and visualization tool. The Data Catalog not only incorporates existing data, but aims to develop new data with a variety of regional partners. Our goal is to develop a comprehensive regional storehouse of data on a wide range of human use, environmental, socioeconomic, and regulatory data, including: fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites. Marine Planner allows users to visualize data in a rich, user-friendly digital format and will be used in interactive meetings, web forums, and one-on-one communications with various stakeholder groups to build an inclusive and comprehensive marine planning process.



What are the MARCO Portal project goals?

The overarching objective is to improve stakeholder and public knowledge about ocean uses and resources, by:

- Educating ocean managers, users, and key stakeholders about the Portal and the data being used to enhance the portal;
- Identifying data needs and priorities for ongoing data collection and future research;
- Including reporting and other features that can be used to enhance understanding about ocean resources, and inform ocean planning and management decisions; and
- Supporting MARCO's involvement in evolving federal regional offshore planning efforts.

How are ocean stakeholders involved?

The MARCO Portal project will involve stakeholders using small and larger interactive meetings, personal communications and web-based forums to:

- Vet our existing data and information to ensure accuracy and relevance
- Fill data gaps, through contributions of local and scientific knowledge
- Learn how to use the digital visualization tool and improve its usability
- Build inclusive and comprehensive ocean management criteria

This project will also improve the Portal's usability through active engagement of ocean users and key stakeholders, and encourage their participation throughout the planning process.

How will stakeholder data be used?

Data will be integrated as digital layers in Marine Planning mapping tool, so that it can be visualized and overlaid with other data. Data and information identified through stakeholder input, and protocols for the display of the data will be vetted with the stakeholders before making data available in Marine Planner.

Who is the Portal project team?

Tony MacDonald, Monmouth University, Urban Coast Institute, Project Manager

Jeanne Herb, Rutgers University, Edward J. Bloustein School, Stakeholder Engagement Team lead

Jay Odell, Mid-Atlantic Marine Director, The Nature Conservancy, the Technical Team lead. Rick Lathrop, Director, Rutgers University, Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis

Charles Steinback, Ecotrust, Mapping Consultant

Biliana Cicin-Sain, University of Delaware, College of Earth, Ocean and Environment

How will the Portal team work with MARCO?

A Project Steering Committee including MARCO management board representatives from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia and a representative from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration guides the project and assure close coordination and collaboration with the five states. MARCO's contact person for the Portal project is Laura McKay, state lead for the MARCO Ocean Planning Action Team.

What are the timeline and deliverables?

The project timeline is January 2012 through May 2013. The team anticipates developing three enhanced versions of the Portal over the course of the project for review by stakeholder groups:

- Version 1, available in late spring/early summer 2012, will include improved design and additional data focusing on offshore wind energy and maritime industries;
- Version 2 will be available late fall 2012, and include additional recreational use and fisheries data information, and
- Version 3, with improved usability and reporting features, will be available in late spring 2013.

For more information about the Portal project please contact

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