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In US, interim framework released for marine spatial planning

The US Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force released an interim framework in December 2009 that proposes guidance for a system of coastal and marine spatial planning in US waters. Under the framework, the planning would be carried out on a regional basis across nine regional planning areas. Each regional process would be facilitated by a federal interagency National Ocean Council, which would also certify that the resulting plans were consistent with national policy. Each regional plan would be developed cooperatively among federal, state, tribal, and local authorities. The interim framework is available at www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/oceans/interim-framework.

The interim framework defines coastal and marine spatial planning as a "comprehensive, adaptive, integrated, ecosystem-based, and transparent spatial planning process, based on sound science." Following its December release, the interim framework underwent a 60-day public review and comment period, ending 12 February 2010. Coastal and marine spatial planning is one of nine priority objectives proposed in an interim report released by the task force last September ([MEAM 3:2](#)).

In February 2010, a letter signed by 262 marine scientists urged US President Barack Obama to make conservation the foundation of the country's eventual national marine policy. "A National Oceans Policy needs to direct federal agencies unambiguously to work together effectively to protect, maintain, and restore the diversity and productivity of America's marine ecosystems as economic activities in our oceans expand," states the letter, available at www.mcbi.org/what/what_pdfs/NOP_letter.pdf.

Massachusetts releases ocean plan

In December 2009, the US state of Massachusetts released its Ocean Management Plan, concluding an 18-month planning process. The plan provides new environmental protections for the state's waters while setting standards for the development of offshore renewable energy and other uses. Massachusetts state waters extend 3 nm from shore.

"For the first time, the consideration of individual management actions will be informed by an understanding of the broader environmental and social context in which they occur," says Ian Bowles, secretary of energy and environmental affairs for Massachusetts. The plan establishes three types of zones:

- **Prohibited Area** - in which a variety of uses, activities, and facilities are prohibited;
- **Renewable Energy Areas** - dedicated to the development of wind-, wave-, and tidal-generated energy; and
- **Multi-Use Area** - allowing most uses, including renewable energy installations. However, at locations with a specifically protected resource, such as seagrass or marine mammals, projects will be permitted only if their benefits to the public are judged to outweigh detriments to those resources. The Multi-Use Area covers roughly two-thirds of state waters.

"The plan guides necessary or desirable development like aquaculture, utility infrastructure, and renewable energy facilities to locations where impacts will be minimized, and provides clear regulatory guidance to development interests and permitting agencies alike," says Bowles. The plan also prioritizes immediate and long-term data needs and establishes a funded program of study to address those needs.

A 2008 Massachusetts state law - the Oceans Act - mandated creation of the management plan. That law also requires that the plan be reassessed and updated at least once every five years. The Ocean Management Plan, including maps of the zones, is available at <http://bit.ly/8ZidO3>.

BOX: EBM Advice: On developing a marine spatial planning process

Ian Bowles, secretary of energy and environmental affairs for the US state of Massachusetts, recently oversaw development of an ocean management plan for his state (see news brief above). Bowles offered the following advice to administrators elsewhere around the world who are considering developing their own marine spatial planning processes:

Legislation provides guidance and speeds the planning process.

Massachusetts benefited from having keystone legislation - the 2008 Oceans Act - that established policy and guiding principles for ocean management, and set a hard deadline for completion of the plan. Notably the Act exempted commercial fishing from the jurisdiction of the ocean plan. Bowles says the exemption helped to achieve public consensus and avoid difficult discussions that could have slowed development of this first-generation ocean plan. "The Oceans Act allowed planners and stakeholders to move directly into constructive engagement and plan development," he says.

Public-private partnerships can provide services and funding.

The state-run planning process benefited from funding and technical support provided by the Massachusetts Ocean Partnership, an organization consisting of NGOs, fishing industry, energy developers, private consultants, government agencies, and academics (www.massococeanpartnership.org). "Partnership resources gave state planners access to research and management tools that would have otherwise been unavailable, and greatly enhanced the public participation program through web-broadcast public meetings, workshops, and social media," says Bowles. "The key to [the state's] working collaboratively with the Partnership was the careful articulation of the relationship in a memorandum of understanding, with responsibilities clearly communicated internally and to stakeholders."

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"Ridges-to-reefs" network of protected areas to be established in Solomon Islands

In November 2009, local chiefs representing the 21,000 residents of the island of Choiseul in the Solomon Islands agreed to establish a network of terrestrial and marine protected areas extending from the island's mountain ridges to its coral reefs. The chiefs also agreed to designate at least one terrestrial protected area and one marine protected area in each of the island's 12 administrative wards. The agreements were based on recommendations made by The Nature Conservancy. Choiseul is part of the Coral Triangle and is considered the most biodiverse island in the Solomon archipelago. For more information on the agreements, go to www.nature.org/wherewework/asiapacific/solomonislands/features/choiseul.html.

Report: Balancing species-based management with ecosystem-based management

One challenge that managers often face in applying EBM occurs when they are already required to conserve particular focal species and habitats. In such cases, strategies for species-based management and for ecosystem-based management may not overlap perfectly. So how can managers balance the competing mandates? A new report published by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration examines this source of conflict, focusing on the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. There, resource managers are responsible for managing several focal resources, like the endangered Hawaiian monk seal, while also applying an EBM approach to the protected area as a whole. The report proposes a process to prioritize conservation and management efforts. The report *Reconciling Ecosystem-Based Management and Focal Resource Conservation in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument* is available at http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/conservation/pdfs/ebm_pnmn.pdf.

Report available on MPAs, marine spatial planning in Nordic region

A new report presents lessons gathered from a 2006 meeting on the use of marine protected areas in marine spatial planning, with particular focus on the experience of Nordic countries. The meeting, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, brought together researchers, managers, and NGO and industry representatives from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The report *Marine Spatial Planning in the Nordic Region: Principles, Perspectives and Opportunities* summarizes concepts, describes planning tools, and offers several case studies. It is available at <http://bit.ly/bNo3hb>.

New forum on links between oceans, climate

A website was launched in December 2009 to explore the relationship between climate change and oceanic conditions, and inform marine resource management on mitigation and adaptation strategies. The Ocean-Climate Forum, produced by the World Ocean Observatory, is at www.oceanclimate.org.

Course available on geotools for marine spatial planning

In August 2010, a six-day course on the use of geotechnologies in marine spatial planning - such as remote sensing, tracking technologies, and global positioning systems - will be held in the Azores Islands, Portugal. Organized by the Geographical Information & Territorial Planning Centre at the University of the Azores, the course will be held from 7-12 August and will feature lecturers from Spain, Germany, the UK, the US, and Portugal. For more information on the course, go to www.gislands.org.

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