

Coordinate and Support Strategic Action Plan Full Content Outline

Objective: Better coordinate and support Federal, State, Tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government and, as appropriate, engage with the international community.

I. Overview of the Priority Objective

- One of the significant obstacles to effective management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes is the complex set of Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, authorities, mandates, and governance structures intended to manage their use and conservation.
- Consistent approaches to the management of resources, including ecosystem-based and adaptive management, are difficult to achieve given this shared, piece-meal, and overlapping jurisdictional model.
- The United States is party to numerous international agreements and subject to customary international law regarding use and protection of the ocean, coasts and the Great Lakes. The United States should engage both domestically and internationally to achieve increased cooperation and coordination on ocean issues.
- Through increased communication, coordination, and integration across all levels of government, we can streamline processes, reduce duplicative efforts, leverage resources, resolve disparities, and enhance synergy.
- In terms of coordination, the strategic action plan (SAP) will address:
 - Identification of needs, inconsistencies, and duplications in statutory authorities, policies, and regulations, and necessary and appropriate actions to address them;
 - Procedures to identify and align mutual and consistent management objectives and actions across jurisdictions, including those actions identified in other SAPs;
 - Tangible tools and procedures to prevent and resolve conflicts across jurisdictions and disagreements concerning jointly managed ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources; and
 - Opportunities for engaging the international community to further the objectives of the policy, as appropriate.
- In terms of support, the SAP will address:
 - Actions to assist the States, Tribes, territories, and local governments in advancing the network of regional partnerships to protect ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes health;
 - Evaluation of existing or new non-Federal funding sources and options to protect, maintain, and restore ocean resources; and
 - Legislative or regulatory changes necessary to simplify the sharing and transfer of resources among Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies.

II. Context and Continuity

- This Plan will establish mechanisms to enhance communication and coordination among Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, regional, and local governments, external resource managers, and other interested parties. Taken collectively, the individual mechanisms for cooperation recommended in this SAP provide a framework for facilitating future cooperation.
- The analysis of legal, statutory, and regulatory gaps and overlaps will support efforts to reconcile existing authorities and provide recommendations to enact additional legislation or regulation where relevant. It will also help identify opportunities for future collaboration and coordination, as well as develop a shared set of principles and objectives, through identification of agency authorizing language.
- Development of a central repository for information accessible via the National Ocean Council's (NOC) National Information Management System (NIMS) between regions, territories, States, Tribes, and local governments will facilitate the development of networks between similarly aligned actors, and enhance coordination of efforts with regional entities.
- Coordination and revealing overlap will enable managers to effectively leverage funding, and provide a real benefit and incentive to increasing cooperative efforts. Dissemination of Best Management Practices will similarly enhance operations.

III. Body of the Plan

A. Action 1 – Develop a regional communication framework under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP).

1. Why Do This

- Constituents of Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments need consolidated, readily accessible and deliverable information regarding existing regional ocean partnerships, assets, and resources to advance regional ocean governance.
- Over the years, various levels of government have come together to address issues related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes management on a regional basis. These groups address many similar overarching concerns, such as restoration, education, and science, and in many cases are in alignment with the National Ocean Policy.
- As these groups have matured, it has become clear that enhancing communication among them, and with the Federal government, could further the priorities addressed in the National Ocean Policy. Specifically, the ability to simplify access to the breadth of Federal capacities (e.g., funding, expertise, programs) would greatly enhance regional ocean governance. The creation of a website would facilitate information exchange and improve communication.
- A website that served as a repository for national and regional planning documents, available resources for collaboration support, and other relevant information would be a valuable communication tool among these various

identified regional entities, would facilitate information-sharing and mutual progress, and would help avoid duplication of efforts. To ensure that user group needs are met, input will be gathered from States, territories, Tribes, local governments, and Regional Ocean Governance (ROG) entities during website development. ROG entities include the Great Lakes Commission, the Governors' South Atlantic Alliance, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, and the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health.

- This website will also be developed in coordination with the NIMS to facilitate the exchange of information and resources within and between Federal agencies and the various regional State, Tribal, and local government entities.
- Lastly, efforts will be coordinated with other SAP writing teams (e.g. Coastal Marine Spatial Planning, Ecosystem Based Management, Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure) to ensure the effective support and implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

2. Timeframe – Near-term

3. Outcomes

- Improved exchange of information between and among Federal, State, territorial, Tribal, and local government entities, as well as ROGs.
- Improved coordination and understanding among interested parties about which actions are underway at the national and regional level, and where partners could engage.
- Development of a website that includes:
 - Hotlinks connecting the various ROGs.
 - Lists of contact information for each ROG with e-mail info for all members.
 - Lists of key organizations that interface with the regional entities
 - Updated information about the activities of the NOC
 - Access by ROGs to funding, expertise, and program opportunities available to regional initiatives (e.g. National Environmental Policy Act projects).

4. Milestones

- Secure sufficient funding through NOPP for developing a website or web portal.
- Complete feasibility study of hosting the website or web portal via NOPP and integrating with the NIMS
- Complete a website or web portal that provides one-stop shopping for information about ocean governance.
- Enhance intra-Federal agency connection, and enhance interaction with States, through more regularly scheduled (quarterly as the ideal minimum) meetings.

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A

B. Action 2 –Identify, prioritize, and seek to resolve legal barriers to implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

Working through the NOC Legal Interagency Working Group, address legal barriers inhibiting effective implementation of the National Ocean Policy, such as uncertainty, inconsistency, or overlap of authorities. Conduct an analysis of overlaps or sufficiency in statutory authority on particular topics identified through this process. Develop forums whereby Federal, State, Tribal, local officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) can interact and exchange information to work through barriers to collaboration.

1. Why Do This

- There may be insufficient or redundant authorities in Federal, State, and Tribal ocean management regimes. This effort will address these issues and align and coordinate competing interests in ocean management, and increase efficiency and effectiveness of ocean management actions.
- This will further the National Ocean Policy’s direction to “ensur[e] a comprehensive and collaborative framework for the stewardship of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes that facilitates cohesive actions across the Federal government...” It also furthers the principles stated in the National Ocean Policy; in particular it will help “ensure and advance coordination and collaboration across Federal, State, Tribal, and local jurisdictional lines” and “eliminate redundancy and encourage efficiencies and synergies.”

2. Time Frame: Near-term to Mid-term

3. Outcomes

- Identification of the most significant redundancies, conflicts, and inefficiencies in the current ocean management regime with respect to State, Tribal, and local equities.
- Deliverables may include:
 - Review of reports of the various entities that have already assessed the authorities in U.S. ocean management.
 - Identification of any critical issues not currently being addressed by the NOC Legal Interagency Working Group, and prioritization for closer examination or action.
 - Legal analysis of these issues, which may include recommendations for legislative, regulatory, or administrative changes.

4. Milestones

- Conduct review of existing reports and analyses
- Identify any critical issues requiring further analysis
- Conduct analysis and make recommendations

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A

C. Action 3 – Identify barriers and obstacles to successful collaboration efforts.

Examine barriers between and among Federal, State, Tribal, regional, territorial, and local entities. Conduct this activity in consultation with and with the participation of ROGs, Tribal, and representative groups and industries to achieve stakeholder perspectives as well as governmental perspectives. Determine the origin of obstacles to collaboration, be it gaps or overlaps in legislation, institutional culture of agencies, competition between entities, political pressure from select constituencies, or other possible reasons. Assess where there is the need for remedial engagement tools, and implement those tools in coordination with the NOC Legal Interagency Working Group, to achieve an early resolution of competing authorities and interests.

1. Why Do This

- Effective management of ocean resources is sometimes delayed or obstructed by confusion, misdirection, and conflicts between agencies and laws.
- Identifying barriers and obstacles among existing entities and proposing solutions will provide opportunities for greater collaboration and alignment.

2. Timeframe –Mid-term

3. Outcomes

- Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, regional, local governments, and ROGs function in a more integrated manner and with greater efficiency.

4. Milestones

- Engage the ROGs in this discussion, noting ROG methods of dispute resolution. Input from other levels of interest, including industry and insular islands and territories, should be sought.
- Identify the most common conflicts and their causes. These might include jurisdictional overlap or uncertainty in statutes, tendencies toward mission creep, cultural differences in agencies and governments, or lack of communication among executing entities.
- Identify solutions for the most problematic or frequent causes.

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A

D. Action 4 – Identify and disseminate Best Management Practices (BMPs) utilized in Federal or regional partnerships.

Help ensure that National Ocean Policy implementation will be successfully and consistently managed despite the diverse planning groups with varied traditions and activities throughout the regions.

1. Why Do This

- Federal agencies, States, Tribes, local governments, and ROGs and other regional ocean partnerships have varied governance structures and ways to encourage important collaborators to participate in regional ocean planning and implementation efforts.
- This action will help to evaluate successful existing coordination practices among Federal, State, Tribal, local, university, private-public partnerships, NGOs, coastal communities, and Fishery Management Councils to share creative solutions and lessons learned.

2. Timeframe—Mid-term

3. Outcomes

- Identification of successful practices and models of Federal partnerships between and among Federal agencies, ROGs and other regional ocean partnerships, Tribes, and local communities for successful practices within the partnerships. Assess the tools and techniques used by successful models of coordination, understand the timeline involved in establishing a framework for cooperation, and assess the costs and benefits of various alternatives.
- Identification of existing coordination mechanisms, evaluated in terms of the National Ocean Policy priorities, and development of processes to use them to support the goals identified in the National Ocean Policy.
- Promotion and adoption of the positive results of current successful coordination and support mechanisms.

4. Milestones

- Publish guidance that identifies and outlines how to incorporate existing successful coordination practices for other interagency teams and partnerships.
- Integrate BMPs into existing regional management plans at a Federal-level and encourage that they be stepped down into all plans.

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A

E. Action 5 – Identify specific ways to prioritize and coordinate resources, reduce spending overlap, and leverage funding between and among Federal agencies, Tribes, and ROGs.

Once those mechanisms are identified, encourage agencies to leverage resources through collaborative efforts using partnership organizations.

1. Why Do This

- Improved coordination within the Federal Government, between Federal, Tribal, State, regional, territorial, and local bodies, and through government-private partnerships will enable all parties to better leverage limited resources.
- This action will identify and inventory specific ways to leverage funding sources among and between Federal agencies, States, Tribes, local governments, ROGs, NGOs, and the private sector.
- We will explore existing capacity building collaborations, including but not limited to NOPP, Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESU) National Network, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program, the National Sea Grant Program, State coastal management programs, and NGOs to encourage stronger participation in using these programs to carry out the objectives of the National Ocean Policy.

2. Timeframe —Long-term

3. Outcomes

- Determination of how to best leverage existing and future ocean-focused budgets, as well as work plans within and across the Federal government through coordination with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- Identification of overlapping or related resources that are being provided by State, Tribal, and local governments, as well as non-profits or private entities.
- Identification of programs and projects with greater opportunities for leveraging funding resources through partnerships with Federal agencies and ROGs.
- Reduction of obstacles and streamlining cross-Federal coordination processes (e.g., interagency agreements, General Services Administration smart buys, grants and cooperative assistance)
- Agencies better utilize and support existing collaborative partnerships.
- Leveraging of Federal, State, Tribal, local government, university, and nonprofit programs that work with coastal communities.

4. Milestones

- Produce a budget in coordination with OMB that identifies existing funding sources within the Federal budget that support the nine priority objectives.
- Identify and compile the common goals among the Federal agencies, States, Tribes, local governments, ROGs, and Federal partnerships. From the common goals, identify those funds which may be strategically leveraged to maximize the benefits relative costs.
- Evaluate existing efforts to streamline cross-Federal coordination processes to ensure that real or perceived obstacles among the agencies related to implementing the National Ocean Policy are addressed.
- Work with NOPP, CESU, the LCCs, and coastal management programs to identify opportunities for encouraging participation in these collaborative efforts.

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A

F. Action 6 –Identify appropriate opportunities for engaging the international community about the National Ocean Policy.

Elicit international support for and improve coordination on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes issues, in particular with countries that share the United States maritime boundaries.

1. Why Do This

- Implementation of our National Ocean Policy will be facilitated by enhanced communication and collaboration with the international community.
- Doing so will increase awareness of the National Ocean Policy by other countries and international organizations, and will increase support for the objectives of the National Ocean Policy from key international partners.
- Coordination with international partners is critical in responding to projected changes from climate change.

2. Timeframe – Mid-term

3. Outcomes

- Increased awareness of the National Ocean Policy by other countries and international organizations.
- Increased support for the National Ocean Policy objectives and strategies from key international partners.
- Development and implementation of similar policies by other countries and in other regions.

4. Milestones

- Create an inventory of bilateral and multilateral agreements/discussions (including inter-agency, inter-ministerial, and inter-governmental) by a sponsoring Federal agency so that common interests and efforts may be more closely coordinated between agencies.
- Develop additional international partnerships, where relevant, to effectively promote our National Ocean Policy.
- Identify international organizations that address ocean and maritime issues in the National Ocean Policy
- Identify countries that may have an interest in exchanging information on matters related to the National Ocean Policy.

5. Gaps and Needs in Science and Technology – N/A