

Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does the President's Executive Order do?

The Executive Order establishes for the first time a comprehensive, integrated National Policy for the stewardship of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. It sets our Nation on a new path toward comprehensive planning for their preservation and sustainable use. It also creates a new National Ocean Council to provide sustained, high-level, and coordinated attention to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes issues and to focus on actions to advance the National Policy.

The Executive Order adopts the *Final Recommendations* of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and directs Federal agencies to implement them under the guidance of the National Ocean Council.

Q: Does the National Policy constitute new regulations or restrictions?

The National Policy outlines the use of existing authority to strengthen ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stewardship. It aims to improve the coordination of ocean and coastal management efforts at all levels of government, restore the health of these resources, enhance the ocean and coastal economies, and promote sustainable uses and access.

The National Policy does not establish any new regulations or restrict any ocean uses or activities. It does not require new legislation in order to be implemented and does not supersede or alter any agency or department's existing authority.

Q: What will the National Policy mean for the American public?

Americans want clean beaches, abundant seafood and wildlife, a robust economy and jobs and recreational opportunities from our ocean, coasts and the Great Lakes areas. The National Policy puts us on a path to achieving this and will significantly advance our response to the long-term challenges and impacts of climate and environmental changes and non-sustainable use. The actions will also further enhance the many vital benefits our Nation can derive from the ocean, our coasts, and Great Lakes.

The *Final Recommendations* do not restrict or regulate any use or activity. Rather, they lay out a multi-year process and begin a conversation with the American public and stakeholders about how the Nation can advance its environmental and economic interests through the growth of sustainable and productive ocean uses, and the preservation and restoration of these ecosystems. By providing opportunities for robust stakeholder and public engagement during implementation of the National Policy and the development of coastal and marine spatial planning, the American public will be able to shape the future of their oceans, coasts and Great Lakes.

Q: How would the new National Ocean Council and National Policy relate to the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf or improve the response by the Federal Government to such disasters?

The Ocean Policy Task Force formed in June 2009, at the President's request. The result is that the United States will have, for the first time, a national policy aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the ocean, our coasts and the Great Lakes.

The National Ocean Policy is intended to help the United States think comprehensively about our ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources, and to make informed management decisions. The Deepwater Horizon spill is a demonstration of how much we rely on healthy and resilient ocean and coastal ecosystems in our daily lives. A comprehensive, integrated, science-based national ocean policy is essential to helping us sustainably manage these resources.

Q: How is the Administration going to fund the National Ocean Council and the implementation of the National Policy?

The President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request contains additional funding to advance priority activities identified in these recommendations, including coastal and marine spatial planning and geospatial modernization (\$12 million), regional ocean partnership grants (\$20 million), and integrated ecosystem assessments (\$5 million).

The FY2011 Budget Request also includes investment across many Federal agencies for activities that support these recommendations, including: habitat restoration, water quality improvement, port and coastal security, improvements in marine transportation safety and efficiency, coastal and estuarine land protection, research and development of ocean sensor technology, catch-share based fisheries management, environmental tools to support resilient coastal communities, and ocean acidification research.

The Administration is confident that making these investments will advance the economic interests of the United States and improve efficiencies across the Federal Government.

Q: What did the Task Force gain through its public engagement process? Were there common themes?

The public meetings, roundtables, and website showcased a strong desire and enthusiasm among participants for a National Policy that provides clarity and direction for how the Nation will better care for the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

Diverse interests were represented through the public engagement process. Several key themes emerged and were incorporated into the *Final Recommendations*, including: the importance of science-based decision making; support for improved transparency and public participation; avoiding new layers of bureaucracy and unnecessary costs; and support for ensuring that policies are adequately funded.

Q: What is coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP)?

As defined in the *Final Recommendations*, "CMSP is a comprehensive, adaptive, integrated, and transparent spatial planning process, based on sound science, for analyzing current and anticipated uses of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes areas. CMSP identifies areas most suitable for various types

or classes of activities in order to reduce conflicts among uses, reduce environmental impacts, facilitate compatible uses, and preserve critical ecosystem services to meet economic, environmental, security, and social objectives. In practical terms, CMSP provides a public policy process to better determine how the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes are sustainably used and protected now and for future generations.”(page 41)

Q: What is the *Framework for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning*?

The framework for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) is a new, integrated and proactive approach to better determine how the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes are sustainably used and protected now and in the future. It moves us away from the current sector-by-sector, statute by statute approach toward a management that can properly account for cumulative effects, sustain multiple ecosystem services, and explicitly evaluate the tradeoffs associated with proposed alternative uses.

The framework defines national goals and principles for CMSP and offers a roadmap for comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based planning that will address conservation, economic activity, national and homeland security, user conflict, and sustainable use.

Q: Does the National Policy zone or restrict uses, such as recreational fishing, or curtail access?

The National Policy is not a map drawing exercise and does not contain a zoning plan or establish any restrictions on activities, nor does it restrict access. Rather, the framework for CMSP describes a process for developing and implementing coastal and marine spatial planning in the United States.

CMSP is a multi-year process for the development of coastal and marine spatial plans (CMS Plans) that will include extensive stakeholder and public participation. The CMSP process will enable improved coordination with the conservation activities of recreational users, who have a long history of actively participating in the stewardship of these resources.

Management decisions will be made under existing statutory authority to promote cross-sector, compatible uses of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources in a sustainable manner. This will help ensure healthier oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, to the benefit of all recreational activities and the communities and economies that rely on them.

Q: Why do we need coastal and marine spatial planning?

America’s rich and productive coastal regions and waters support tens of millions of jobs and account for trillions of dollars of the national economy. They also host a growing number of commercial, recreational, scientific, energy, and security activities, and provide a wealth of natural resources and ecological benefits. Human uses of the ocean are expanding at a rate that challenges our ability to manage significant and often competing demands.

We need a more integrated, comprehensive, ecosystem-based, flexible, and proactive approach to planning and managing uses and activities. Without this, we risk more user conflicts, increased costs and delays from planning and regulatory inefficiencies, and the potential loss of critical economic, ecosystem, social, and cultural services for present and future generations.

Q: Who will be in charge of CMSP?

The National Ocean Council will facilitate the regional development and implementation of CMSP. Regional CMS Plans will be developed outside of Washington D.C., by regional planning bodies consisting of Federal, State, tribal, and other representatives.

Q: How will the Administration and National Ocean Council implement a transparent and comprehensive public participation process in developing strategies for the National Priority Objectives and for Coastal and Marine Spatial Plans?

Robust public and stakeholder engagement is essential to the success of a CMSP process. Including a broad range of interests throughout the planning and implementation of CMSP is necessary to strengthen understanding of challenges and opportunities, and will better inform the process and its outcomes.

As the National Ocean Council (NOC) develops and revises strategic action plans for the priority objectives, it will ensure substantial opportunity for public participation. The NOC will reach out to these interested parties through its Governance Coordinating Committee comprised of state, tribal, and local government representatives, the NOC's stakeholder advisory body, and by other means. Final plans, revisions, and reports of how well plan performance measures are being met will be made publicly available. In addition, a major responsibility of each of the regional planning bodies established for coastal and marine spatial planning will be to ensure strong public participation.

Q: How would CMSP work?

The framework for CMSP lays out a multi-year process for the flexible development and implementation of CMSP, facilitated by the National Ocean Council. Nine regional planning bodies (Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Great Lakes, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, West Coast, Pacific Islands, and Alaska/Arctic) will be established that include Federal, State, and tribal representatives from each region.

Regional planning bodies will work together to develop CMS Plans for their respective regions. In developing CMSP, the regional planning bodies will need to incorporate certain essential elements, as described in the framework (e.g., identify regional objectives; engage stakeholders and the public; consult scientists and technical and other experts; analyze data, uses, services, and impacts).

Q: Will CMSP require Congressional authorization or provide new authorities?

CMSP will be developed and implemented under existing authorities. CMSP will not vest the National Ocean Council or regional planning bodies with new or independent legal authority to supersede existing State, Federal, or tribal authorities.

Q: How will the Framework for CMSP affect laws such as the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act?

CMSP will build upon and significantly improve existing Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional decision-making and planning processes. The intent is to design a more comprehensive way to manage multiple uses of the marine environment in a sustainable manner, minimize conflicts among uses and with the environment, and facilitate compatible uses. CMSP is intended to provide a stronger framework for application of existing laws and agency authorities, but is not intended to supersede them.

Q: What happens next? When and how does the National Ocean Council become established?

The National Ocean Council will hold its first meeting in late summer 2010 to begin the immediate work of implementing the National Policy. After an initial period to organize itself and its component advisory bodies, the National Ocean Council's interagency policy committees will develop strategic action plans for the priority objectives within six to twelve months of the Council's establishment. The National Ocean Council will also begin to immediately implement the phased approach, as outlined in the *Final Recommendations*, to develop and implement Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning in the United States.

Q: How can local citizens participate in the implementation of the National Policy?

There will be numerous opportunities for the public to participate in the implementation of the National Policy, especially in regards to the development of regional coastal and marine spatial plans. Stakeholder and public participation will be sought through a variety of mechanisms that may include, but are not limited to, workshops, town halls, public hearings, public comment processes, and other appropriate means.