

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE DRAFT NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Q. What is the *Implementation Plan*?

A. As part of President Obama's charge for Federal agencies to implement the National Ocean Policy, the National Ocean Council developed actions to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Collectively, the actions are now encompassed in a single draft *National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan* (*Implementation Plan*). The draft *Implementation Plan* describes more than 50 actions the Federal Government will take to improve the health of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, which support tens of millions of jobs, contribute trillions of dollars a year to the national economy, and are essential to public health and national security. For each action, the draft Plan outlines key milestones, identifies responsible agencies, and indicates the expected timeframe for completion. This structure is designed to provide a clear layout of what will be accomplished and when, and who will be engaged.

Q. What are the National Priority Objectives?

A. Implementation of the National Ocean Policy is structured around nine priority objectives to improve the stewardship of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes:

- Ecosystem-based management
- Coastal and marine spatial planning
- Inform decisions and improve understanding
- Better coordinate and support Federal, State, tribal, and local and regional management
- Resiliency and adaptation to climate change and ocean acidification
- Regional ecosystem protection and restoration
- Water quality and sustainable practices on land
- Changing conditions in the Arctic
- Ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observations, mapping, and infrastructure

Q. Why is the *Implementation Plan* important?

A. The National Ocean Policy unifies Federal efforts around clearly articulated priorities, and the *Implementation Plan* provides the path to achieve them. Under the draft *Implementation Plan*, the Federal Government can more effectively focus limited Federal resources on meeting the essential needs of Americans and ensuring the delivery of demonstrable results in addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes regions.

Q. What are some examples of these actions and anticipated results?

A. Actions include:

- Improving the efficiency of ocean and coastal permitting processes, beginning with aquaculture;
 - Currently, overlapping and sometimes conflicting permit review processes can result in unnecessary delay, increased costs, and lack of predictability for commercial investments. Efficient, coordinated permitting processes will allow ocean industries to save time and money and encourage economic growth without compromising Federal agency responsibilities to protect health, safety, and the environment.
- Improving water quality by reducing the impacts of trash, marine debris, and sources of excess nutrients, sediments, pollutants, and pathogens;
 - Pollution to streams, rivers, estuaries, and coasts is a significant cause of declining ocean and coastal ecosystem health. Agencies will identify and implement conservation and best management practices, and promote voluntary partnership programs with stakeholders to reduce rural and urban sources of pollution.
- Providing locally tailored forecasts and vulnerability assessments of climate-change impacts on coastal communities.
 - Understanding the vulnerabilities of coastal communities and their economies enables local decision-makers and stakeholders to reduce the risks and impacts of sea level rise and other climate change impacts, and make appropriate investments in infrastructure, public health and economic development. Federal agencies will improve the quality and accessibility of information for Federal, State and local decision makers on the vulnerability of coastal and ocean communities and environments.
- Improving environmental response management in the Arctic;
 - Melting sea ice in the Arctic will enable development of natural resources such as oil and gas, as well as commercial shipping and other marine traffic. Federal agencies will work with State, local and international partners to develop and implement response coordination and procedures for oil spills and other potential incidents, to protect communities and ecosystems from adverse impacts.

Q. How will the *Implementation Plan* increase efficiencies?

- A.** The *Implementation Plan* identifies not only resource requirements, but also expected efficiencies to be gained in plan implementation among Federal agencies, and with State, tribal, and local government partners. Through increased communication, coordination, and integration across all levels of government, agencies will streamline processes and reduce duplicative efforts, while better leveraging limited resources.

Q. How was the draft *Implementation Plan* developed?

A. The draft *Implementation Plan* was developed with significant input from national, regional, and local stakeholders and the general public. The National Ocean Council sought public comment from January through April 2011 and June through July 2011, and held 12 regional listening sessions around the country. In addition, the Governance Coordinating Committee, composed of State, Tribal, and local government officials, and the Ocean Research Advisory Panel, composed of expert representatives from a range of ocean sectors, provided input for the Plan.

Q. How do the *Implementation Plan* actions relate to existing initiatives such as the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force or those in the Great Lakes?

A. The National Ocean Council is charged with implementing the National Ocean Policy and addressing broad, national enhanced stewardship of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, including economic, environmental, social, and national security issues. One priority area is regional ecosystem restoration including issues such as water quality impacts and other large scale threats, ecosystem-based management, and coordination and support among Federal and state agencies at the regional scale.

Federal agencies are engaged in various regions through interagency collaborations focused on regional ecosystem restoration and management. The National Ocean Policy and the National Ocean Council provide an overarching framework for ongoing ecosystem specific efforts. Two ongoing restoration initiatives that exemplify the principles of the National Ocean Policy are the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. Both of these initiatives demonstrate how regional, State, and local entities can work together to address common goals for protecting and restoring natural resources in concert with building strong coastal economies and resilient communities.

Q. How can the public participate in the development of the *Implementation Plan*?

A. The National Ocean Council is seeking public input to inform the development of final *Implementation Plan*. The comment period for the draft *Implementation Plan* ends on February 27, 2012. The primary avenues for engaging in this process are:

- 1) Submit comments electronically at:
<http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans/comment>
- 2) Submit comments by fax to "Attn: National Ocean Council" at (202) 456-0753.

Further information on opportunities to participate and contribute to the development of the *Implementation Plan* will be posted on the National Ocean Council website:
<http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/oceans>.

Q. When will the final plan be released?

A. The draft *Implementation Plan* is available for public review through February 27, 2012. The final *Implementation Plan* is expected to be released in spring 2012.

Q. How will the final *Implementation Plan* be utilized?

A. Once final, each participating Federal agency will begin implementing the actions contained in the *Implementation Plan*. Federal agencies will, as appropriate, coordinate and collaborate with State, Tribal, and local authorities, regional governance structures, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, recreational users, private enterprise, and other stakeholders.

The *Implementation Plan* is intended to be adaptive and allow for modifications. The Plan will be reviewed annually and modified as needed based on new information or changing conditions.