

## **REGIONAL OCEAN GOVERNANCE: LEVERAGING THE EFFORTS**

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International, national, and sub-national initiatives are increasingly focused on regional ocean governance as an effective and necessary tool to addressing the many issues facing the health of our global oceans and human society. Protecting ecosystem services provided by the world's ocean, ensuring emerging security, energy, and global food needs, and balancing existing and historic uses of our commonly-held marine resources are daunting challenges. How effective is the management tool of regionally-based governance and how can universities best engage?

In the context of the panel discussion, the term *regional ocean governance* refers to a management paradigm that spans the procedures and structures established for individual nations or states to address marine-related concerns of a group of government and non-governmental bodies. Multi-jurisdictional initiatives typically define priorities and cooperation mechanisms to share management and responsibilities around specific, well-defined issues. They engage the full spectrum of stakeholders, from all levels of government, the public, industry and academia in science-based decision-making. In the U.S., alone, more than 19 regional and 9 state ocean initiatives have been created, according to the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, since the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy called for regional mechanisms to achieve a more coordinated and integrated approach to improving ocean and coastal health.

This panel will briefly highlight progress of the regional state-led alliances on the coastal ocean of the United States, while suggesting the need for an "alliance of alliances". In particular, the panel will focus on the critical partnership role and influence of universities and institutions-of-higher-learning. The panel will examine the special niche that universities hold in promoting and fostering implementation of regional ocean governance by virtue of being seen as credible neutral parties with influence in the community. Universities are appropriate conveners to build relationships that spawn trust and create the public space for conversation and creative thinking. And, in addition to being "think tanks", universities bring resources to the table - policy experts, social and natural scientists, applied researchers, funding, and the next generation of ocean stewards. Students and faculty typically think and work across traditional boundaries and are often at the intersection of emerging policy among the public, private and nonprofit sectors. How can regional alliances better employ these valuable academic resources?

A concluding panel summary will be that regional ocean governance allows for better alignment of decision-making when addressing agreed-upon goals on behalf of systems (natural, socio/economic or cultural) that cross jurisdictional boundaries; coordinated partnerships can strengthen other relationships with non-governmental and private actors, leading to cross-sectoral opportunities; and, power in alliances can lead to efficiencies and economies of scale when sharing and leveraging resources. Universities can play a crucial role.

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