

Promote and support regional ocean collaboration

Ocean ecosystems, including the marine species and ocean currents that help define their boundaries, span political jurisdictions, as do shipping lanes, fishing grounds, and other human uses. Accordingly, to be effective, ocean and coastal planning and management activities must be multi-jurisdictional and involve the full suite of government agencies and stakeholders that can bring resources, information, and expertise to the table. Improving ocean governance requires proactive coordination and collaboration in solving complex problems, advancing everyday management objectives, and reacting to crises, such as hurricanes or oil spills. More than a decade ago, the [U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy](#) and the [Pew Oceans Commission](#) strongly recommended a regional approach to managing America's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. They argued that regional collaboration is the best approach to improving ocean governance and managing marine resources. This is still needed today.

Direct federal agencies to strongly support and closely coordinate with regional initiatives

Regional scale, multi-sectoral collaborative approaches to ocean management are gaining momentum in the United States. The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions have led the way in developing and implementing the nation's first regional ocean plans by collaborating across federal, state, and tribal jurisdictions and engaging diverse stakeholders and the public. These plans outline a series of best practices and specific collaborative actions that federal agencies, states, tribes, and regional fishery management councils are implementing together to improve ocean management. Unique to regional ocean planning, federally recognized tribes that choose to participate in the process have a seat at the table and can be actively involved in sharing information, developing best practices for early coordination, and collaborating on specific management issues.

Regional ocean plans address traditional (e.g., fishing, recreation) ocean activities and emerging ocean uses (e.g., offshore wind power, offshore aquaculture) with the goal of protecting ecosystems and human health, fostering sustainable ocean uses, and improving the compatibility of ocean management, protection, and uses. These plans inform and improve decision making under existing authorities and support open, transparent dialogue among those who manage competing uses in the ocean. Because government funding is limited, regional collaboration helps federal, state, and tribal agencies leverage the resources they do have to magnify and enhance their ability to meet shared objectives. To leverage resources, regional leaders should:

- Identify and support common research needs.
- Improve information available for environmental and regulatory reviews.
- Increase collaboration and transparency across agencies and institutions.
- Inform and improve management decisions.

The Trump Administration and Congress should support implementation of current regional planning efforts and the development of additional regional efforts to coordinate ocean activities. Ongoing federal leadership and support for implementation will be vital to the success of these

efforts. This support should include coordinating federal agency data and information sharing, ensuring efficient decision making across jurisdictions, championing stakeholder engagement on regional scales, and continuing support for the collaborative processes that underpin the progress being made.

Federal leadership is also needed to help new regions seize the opportunity for collaborative planning. Given that human activities, marine life, and other key components of the marine system span regional boundaries, federal leadership is needed to ensure that regions coordinate with one another.

Ultimately, efforts to better understand complex ocean resource challenges, share data and information, and coordinate decision making on a regional scale have enormous potential to produce tangible economic benefits for ocean and coastal ecosystems and the industries, ocean users, and coastal communities that depend on them.