

# NROC CMSP Workshop Summary

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The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) Workshop was held in Bristol, Rhode Island on March 12-13, 2012. The workshop was attended by approximately 200 representatives from state and federal agencies, tribes, NGOs, consultants, commercial and recreational fishermen, charter boat associations, marine transport associations, an offshore wind developer, and other stakeholder groups. The meeting objectives were:

- Build a shared understanding of ocean planning in New England.
- Inform participants about progress made at the regional and national levels that lays the groundwork for successful ocean planning in New England.
- Provide meaningful engagement among participants and opportunities to provide input related to both the process and substance of ocean planning.
- Build commitment to ongoing collaboration and support among regional stakeholders for ocean planning in the region.

Workshop participants were introduced to (or reminded of) NROC's work plan for regional ocean planning. NROC has designed to work plan with the intention of producing the foundational elements necessary for a regional ocean plan. These foundational elements will be achieved over the next two years, and funding has been secured for these efforts. The goals for these next two years are:

1. Well-engaged public
2. Issue-specific goals established
3. Spatial data and tools compiled/developed
4. Baseline characterization of the region
5. Potential plan implementation options

NROC has also drafted goals and timelines for subsequent ocean planning efforts, should future funding be secured.

NROC made the conscious decision to engage the stakeholders at the workshop before crafting the broad vision and goals of the northeast regional ocean plan so that stakeholders could influence the vision and goals. Though this approach is logical, many stakeholders expressed confusion about what the end goal of the workshop and the planning process would be, stating that their input would depend on the larger vision. NROC Executive Committee members offered that stakeholder engagement and goal-setting is not a chicken-and-egg problem, the two should occur concurrently and should be iterative.

Another source of confusion at the workshop was the differences and similarities between NROC's regional ocean planning and the National Ocean Policy's (NOP's) CMSP objective and Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs). In the opening panel, National Ocean Council representative Michael Weiss gave a cursory explanation of the NOP and stated that the NOP and NROC planning processes will be closely aligned, and NROC's planning will help to demystify the NOP process. On the second day of the workshop, a venn diagram of the NROC and RPB processes (see below) was shown for clarification. The general feeling from stakeholders about the RPB is that it may not

be stood-up or go anywhere, the RPB is a “shadow government body, ” and that NROC and the RPB will be doing the same planning, so NROC should just become the RPB. The NROC Planning Director assured participants that NROC will continue its regional ocean planning regardless of what happens on the national level. If the RPB is successfully stood up, NROC can act as its “workhorse” for planning efforts.

At the workshop, attendees participated in three breakout groups with specific topics of discussion. After each breakout group, a panel of NROC representatives and/or key stakeholders would respond to the concepts that emerged in the small groups and answer questions. The following is a list of key points that were made during the breakout sessions and subsequent panels:

### **Messaging**

- Effective messaging is critical.
- NROC’s planning process is not about seizing property or rights, it’s about better-informed decision-making.
- NROC must incentivize participation by demonstrating the value of the process and the data involved.
- One commercial fisherman stated that people don’t act unless they perceive a threat, so the message to stakeholders should be that something of theirs will be taken away unless they participate in the planning process. I personally disagree with this messaging approach because it sets the stage for tension rather than collaboration.
- NROC needs an elevator pitch for its planning effort, because currently there is a lot of confusion about it.

### **Process**

- NROC must utilize communication channels and information that already exists.
- NROC should focus on driving sectors (offshore wind development, fishing, and marine transportation), at least to start.
- Bad transparency can result from bad behavior (e.g., BOEM holding a public meeting in New Bedford one week before a comment period closed).

### **Substance**

- One idea for the larger planning vision was, “sustainable use of the ocean in a multi-use environment.”
- The planning process will start with gathering sound data and science. But at some point, tradeoff decisions must be made based on values. NROC and its planning process will be a forum for discussing values and tradeoffs.
- NROC is a forum for the community of stakeholders; stakeholders should take responsibility for expressing their priorities and not assume someone else will figure out what they need if they don’t say it.
- The result of the planning process should be that people will know what to expect when they go out to use the ocean, not that they will be told where they can or can’t use the ocean.
- NROC must be careful about the term “dispute resolution” because there are legal authorities in place (appealable rights, etc.) that cannot be supplanted.
- NROC can find out each sector’s business plans for the next 5, 10, 25 years, etc. and associated impacts. This knowledge can be used to balance sector activities.
- The plan should connect and balance local needs and regional efforts.
- A useful effort for NROC would be to map the social landscape—the relationships between organizations and groups.

**NROC-RPB venn diagram**

