

## The Role of Community and the Environment in Shaping Regional Ocean Planning

### What is Regional Ocean Planning?

With the creation of the National Ocean Policy in 2010, ocean policy and management in the United States has begun to move beyond strictly sector-specific initiatives (e.g., fisheries, energy, navigation) towards a more comprehensive or integrative approach—ocean planning.

Past research and experience on oceans management has shown the important, complicated, and sometimes surprising roles that different human and environmental actors can play in shaping the successes—or failures—of policy and management. However, little research has been conducted on the process and implications of ocean planning in the US or elsewhere, including whether and how oceans stakeholders participate in planning, what it means for their future interactions with the ocean, and how the ocean environment—and our scientific knowledge about it—guide planning processes.

We are a group of researchers from Rutgers University, Duke University, and Eckerd College studying the emergence and ongoing process of regional ocean planning in the US, focusing on efforts in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. We are interested in understanding:

1. *How are communities and the environment being represented and engaged in ocean planning processes?*
2. *How are communities and the environment shaping the future of ocean planning itself?*

To answer these questions, we are exploring how different stakeholders, planning, and government groups interact with one another; how they work together toward regional ocean plans; how new (and existing) ocean data projects, products, and portals influence or guide ROP; and what beneficial outcomes for both the ocean environment and human communities could emerge from ocean planning. The project is funded through the National Science Foundation (award nos. 1359943 and 1359805).

Regional ocean planning is a type of *marine planning*, which the National Ocean Council describes as an:

*“opportunity for all coastal and ocean interests in a region to share information and coordinate activities [in order to] promote more efficient and effective decision-making and enhance regional economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being.”*

Regional ocean planning in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic US are led by partnerships of federal, state, tribal, and other members (e.g., fishermen, researchers, environmental groups, etc.), through initiatives such as the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, and the regional planning bodies (RPBs) formally charged with enacting marine planning in each region.

These groups work across sectors and jurisdictions to inform better and more cohesive ocean governance in each region. Efforts include developing ocean data, engaging the public, improving stakeholder and government communication, and creating regional ocean plans to guide future actions focused on improving ocean health and management.

*Project Team:*

Dr. Lisa Campbell (Duke; Principal Investigator)

Dr. Kevin St. Martin (Rutgers; Principal Investigator)

Dr. Noëlle Boucquey (Eckerd College)

Dr. Sarah Wise (Rutgers)

Dr. Luke Fairbanks (Duke; Primary Contact: lwf3@duke.edu)

