

Public invited to an open house July 20 on draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan

LEWES (July 15, 2016) –DNREC’s Delaware Coastal Programs and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (RPB) invite ocean stakeholders and the interested public to attend an open house to consider a draft Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Action Plan. The open house is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 20 at The Virden Retreat Center, University of Delaware, 700 Pilottown Road, Lewes, DE 19958. The program will begin with a brief presentation on the draft plan, followed by a poster session and opportunities for questions and comment. The agenda can be found on the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) website by clicking [here](#).

“The draft Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan represents nearly three years of deliberations and stakeholder outreach by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body in developing ocean policy for the region,” said Sarah W. Cooksey, Delaware Coastal Program Administrator, who along with DNREC Fisheries Administrator John Clark, is the state’s representative on the RPB. “With many people in Delaware depending on the ocean for its vast resources, the RPB is providing an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to learn about the plan and give comments that will be considered for the final document that will be submitted to the federal government.”

The draft plan outlines a series of actions on how federal and state agencies, tribes and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council can better collaborate to ensure healthy, productive, and resilient marine ecosystems and sustainable ocean uses in the Mid-Atlantic, including state and federal waters off

Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. The draft Plan can be found on the RPB website at <http://www.boem.gov/MidA-New/>. The public comment period closes on September 6, 2016.

The draft plan supports improved government coordination and increased stakeholder participation to ensure healthy ocean ecosystems and sustainable ocean uses. The healthy ocean ecosystem goal promotes ocean health, functionality, and integrity through conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration. Sustainable ocean uses require planning to provide for existing and emerging ocean uses that minimize conflicts, improve effectiveness of government, and support economic growth.

The draft plan has been developed by the RPB with the support of MARCO. Established in 2009 by the Governors of Delaware, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia, MARCO provides a forum for the coastal Mid-Atlantic states to collaborate on shared regional priorities related to marine habitats, renewable offshore energy, climate change adaptation, and ocean water quality.

Last January, Delaware Coastal Programs hosted the MARCO forum on scientific data that was used to develop the draft Ocean Action Plan for the region. The content of the plan is the culmination of research, coordination and planning through contracted projects that included marine ecological data, human use data and the Regional Ocean Assessment.

President Obama's National Ocean Policy mandated that each U.S. ocean and coastal region develop a plan to guide ocean use, manage resources, and utilize the principles of marine spatial planning for increased coordination across all levels of government. Additional information about the RPB may be found at <http://www.boem.gov/Mid-Atlantic-Regional-Planning-Body/>.

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