



# The Truth about the National Ocean Policy

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Last year, President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing a National Ocean Policy that improves stewardship of ocean resources and prioritizes work to address the most pressing challenges facing the oceans. As demands on our oceans continue to grow, the National Ocean Policy brings common-sense collaboration to the management of our marine resources and economies. It will help protect our ocean resources to allow future economic growth and ensure Americans continue to benefit from vital uses of the ocean for commerce, recreation, national security and other activities essential to our economy and quality of life.

The current lack of coordination both within the Federal Government and among Federal, state, and local bodies is inefficient, ineffective, and results in conflict and delays that are bad for business, and bad for our country. The National Ocean Policy fixes this with a regionally based planning process that brings everyone to the table and ensures stakeholders and the public have a voice in decisions that impact our oceans. It is a smart, practical policy that has been called for from groups as varied as fishing, renewable energy, conservation and national and homeland security interests.

Now, some in Congress are seeking to maintain the inefficient and conflict-ridden status quo by spreading inaccurate and misleading information about the National Ocean Policy. Here is the truth about the National Ocean Policy and what it will do for Americans.

### **MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Needs Congressional Authorization.**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy does not alter any government authorities and does not require new legislation to be implemented. It uses existing authority to help Federal agencies foster communication and improve coordination on the nearly 100 different laws, policies and regulations affecting the oceans.

### **MYTH: The Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) Initiative Imposes 'Ocean Zoning.'**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy in no way restricts any ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes activity, nor does it impose ocean zoning through CMSP or any other component. CMSP is a tool that provides transparent information about ocean use, guarantees the public and stakeholders a voice in decisions affecting the oceans, and creates an inclusive, bottom-up planning approach that gives states and regions the ability to make informed decisions about how best to use the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Only the Federal agencies are required to follow the regionally developed CMSPs. Tribal, state and local governments will benefit by having a regional CMSP blueprint to follow, and their participation in CMSP is voluntary.

### **MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Threatens American Jobs.**

**FACTS:** America's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes regions support tens of millions of jobs and contribute trillions of dollars a year to our national economy. Nothing threatens these jobs and economies more than delays that result from poor coordination, ineffective planning, and increasing conflicts among growing numbers of ocean users. The National Ocean Policy will help protect these jobs by improving the health and sustainability of the ocean and through a clearer, more stable and predictable decision-making path. It will ensure sustainable economic growth through common-sense, collaborative planning that creates predictability and fosters an improved climate for investment.

**MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Creates More Bureaucracy.**

**FACTS:** The truth is just the opposite. Currently, all parties are left to independently navigate and interpret approximately 100 laws, regulations, and policies affecting the ocean, a system that is inefficient at best. The National Ocean Policy improves coordination at all levels of government, provides for more informed decision-making, and establishes proactive and cooperative planning among Federal, state, tribal, and local authorities for the first time. The result will be less waste and conflict, more efficiency, and savings for American taxpayers.

**MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Increases Likelihood for Litigation.**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy will reduce the likelihood of litigation and resulting delays that threaten jobs and hamper economic growth. Our current regulatory and permitting structures are sector by sector and typically poorly coordinated. The result has been uncertainty for industry, unseen "show stoppers" in the permitting process that discourage up-front investments, user conflict and confusion, and costly litigation. The proactive and collaborative approach of coastal and marine spatial planning will reduce conflict, provide transparency and predictability for economic investments, and result in cost savings and faster project implementation for businesses.

**MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Will Impose New Costs on Taxpayers.**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy will in fact save taxpayers money by reducing Federal waste, inefficiency and delay. Currently, Federal departments and agencies independently implement a maze of about 100 laws, policies, and regulations related to the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. This has resulted in conflicting priorities, duplication, and ad hoc decision-making that frequently ends in litigation. The National Ocean Policy tackles this hidden and costly maze, and brings everyone to the table to better coordinate and integrate their work. It also helps us prioritize efforts and resources to address the most critical issues facing our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. Hindering an agency's ability to implement the National Ocean Policy will maintain the status quo of ad hoc decision-making, increased conflict, and higher costs.

**MYTH: The Regional Planning Bodies will have no representation by the people, communities, and businesses that will actually be impacted by the regulations.**

**FACTS:** Contrary to this assertion, a cornerstone of collaborative, regionally based CMSP is stakeholder and public participation, and science and information based decision-making. Regional planning bodies include state and tribal representatives that provide essential input from American communities. The National Ocean Policy also requires the regional planning bodies to regularly engage the public and stakeholders at every stage of their planning and decision making processes. Claims that the policy cuts out the public are misinformed as governance to date has been and will continue to be inclusive.

**MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Will Have Far-Reaching Inland Impacts.**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy's CMSP does not mandate inclusion of inland activities, nor does it change any laws or regulatory authorities. Because water flows downstream, pollution that occurs hundreds of miles away can result in frequent beach closures, fish kills, and areas of pollution. Regional planning bodies, which include state and tribal representatives, may choose to evaluate inland impacts on ocean resources. The National Ocean Policy does not prohibit this, but any attempt to link the policy with inland regulations is purely speculative and misleading.

**MYTH: The National Ocean Policy Will Create Regulatory Uncertainty.**

**FACTS:** The National Ocean Policy does not impose any new regulations or alter any existing Federal authorities. In fact, by prioritizing efforts and resources to address critical issues, bringing all levels of government together, and improving coordination among Federal agencies, it provides more predictability and fosters a more stable climate for investment. As with any new initiative, there is the potential for uncertainty until it becomes familiar. The National Ocean Policy proactively addresses this potential through open, regular and transparent engagement with stakeholders and the public to dispel misinformation and answer any questions.

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<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/10/04/truth-about-national-ocean-policy>