

## **A NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE OCEAN, OUR COASTS, AND THE GREAT LAKES**

America's rich and productive ocean and coastal regions and waters support tens of millions of jobs and account for the great majority of the national economy, totaling trillions of dollars each year. They also host a growing number of commercial, recreational, scientific, and security activities, and provide a wealth of natural resources that we use every day. Oil spills, hurricanes, tsunamis, and other human-induced and natural disasters are stark reminders of how vulnerable our ocean and coastal environments are, and how much our communities and our Nation rely on them. But uses of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes are expanding at a rate that challenges our ability to manage significant and often competing demands.

### **The National Ocean Policy**

President Obama recognizes that America's stewardship of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes is intimately linked to national prosperity, environmental sustainability, human health and well-being, adaptation to climate and other environmental change, social justice, foreign policy, and national and homeland security. On July 19, 2010, he signed an Executive Order establishing a National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and the Great Lakes (National Ocean Policy). The Executive Order strengthens ocean governance and coordination, establishes guiding principles for ocean management, and adopts a flexible framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning to address conservation, economic activity, user conflict, and sustainable use of the ocean, our coasts and the Great Lakes.

The National Ocean Policy responds to more than a decade of bipartisan discussions to resolve a long-standing, well-recognized, and significant problem: the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes are a crucial resource for America and are in trouble and we need a comprehensive ocean policy and a more coordinated, integrated approach to managing ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources. The National Ocean Policy answers that call and builds on the past work of two commissions (the U. S. Commission on Ocean Policy, the Pew Ocean Commission), Congress, stakeholders, prior Administrations, and the public to improve ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stewardship.

The National Ocean Policy lays out a comprehensive and science-based approach for Federal, State, tribal, and local partners to achieve sustainable, safe, secure, and productive access to and use of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. It says:

# NATIONAL OCEAN COUNCIL

“To achieve an America whose stewardship ensures that the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes are healthy and resilient, safe and productive, and understood and treasured so as to promote the wellbeing, prosperity, and security of present and future generations, it is the policy of the United States to:

- (i) protect, maintain, and restore the health and biological diversity of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources;
- (ii) improve the resiliency of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems, communities, and economies;
- (iii) bolster the conservation and sustainable uses of land in ways that will improve the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems;
- (iv) use the best available science and knowledge to inform decisions affecting the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes, and enhance humanity’s capacity to understand, respond, and adapt to a changing global environment;
- (v) support sustainable, safe, secure, and productive access to, and uses of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes;
- (vi) respect and preserve our Nation’s maritime heritage, including our social, cultural, recreational, and historical values;
- (vii) exercise rights and jurisdiction and perform duties in accordance with applicable international law, including respect for and preservation of navigational rights and freedoms, which are essential for the global economy and international peace and security;
- (viii) increase scientific understanding of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems as part of the global interconnected systems of air, land, ice, and water, including their relationships to humans and their activities;
- (ix) improve our understanding and awareness of changing environmental conditions, trends, and their causes, and of human activities taking place in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters; and
- (x) foster a public understanding of the value of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes to build a foundation for improved stewardship.”

The National Ocean Policy also provides guiding principles for management decisions and actions to ensure the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes are healthy and resilient, safe and productive, and understood and treasured so as to promote the well-being, prosperity, and security of present and future generations.

The Executive Order establishes an interagency National Ocean Council to implement the National Ocean Policy and coordinate ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes issues across the Federal Government. It highlights the importance of state, tribal, and local authorities by establishing a Governance Coordinating Committee to engage these interests in policy implementation.

## Taking Action

The National Ocean Policy prioritizes nine areas that seek to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes:

- Ecosystem-Based Management
- Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding
- Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure
- Coordinate and Support Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional resource management
- Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration
- Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification
- Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land
- Changing Conditions in the Arctic
- Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning

These priority objectives provide a bridge between the National Ocean Policy and action on the ground and in the water. To address these areas, the National Ocean Council has developed a draft *National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan* that details more than 50 specific actions Federal agencies will undertake to deliver tangible results to the American people. For each action, the plan outlines key milestones, identifies responsible agencies, and indicates the expected timeframe for completion.

### *A Framework for Effective Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning*

With competing interests in the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes, coastal and marine spatial planning, one of the nine priority objectives, offers a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated approach to better inform and guide decisions regarding ocean uses. This planning effort will be regional in scope, developed cooperatively among Federal, State, tribal, and local authorities, and include substantial stakeholder, scientific, and public input. The coastal and marine spatial planning framework:

- Establishes a new regional approach to how we use and protect the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes to decrease user conflicts, improve planning and regulatory efficiencies and decrease costs and delays, and preserve critical ecosystem services.
- Creates a comprehensive alternative to sector-by-sector and statute-by-statute decision-making.
- Uses regional planning bodies to bring Federal, state, and tribal partners together in an unprecedented manner to jointly plan for the future of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.
- Places science-based information at the heart of decision-making.
- Emphasizes stakeholder and public participation.

**More information on the National Ocean Policy and the National Ocean Council, including the Implementation Plan, is available at [www.whitehouse.gov/oceans](http://www.whitehouse.gov/oceans).**