

Comment

The Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (MACOORA) supports marine spatial planning (MSP) as a viable technique for understanding and managing highly complex systems. A fundamental tenet of MSP is that management decisions are made on sound science. Coastal/ocean observations provide the information necessary for sound scientific discovery.

The interim report presents a highly generalized, broad-stroke overview of proposed MSP governance. In turn, these comments refer to overall issues:

1) MACOORA endorses the regional approach consistent with recognized LMEs. The Mid-Atlantic region, as defined, is within the observing domain of MACOORA, and in fact is consistent with the Mid-Atlantic Council on the Ocean (MARCO), a gubernatorial pact.

2) MACOORA strongly endorses the following: “The regional planning body would consult scientists, technical experts and those with traditional knowledge of or expertise in coastal and marine sciences and other relevant disciplines throughout the process to ensure that CMSP is based on sound science and the best available information. ... the regional planning bodies should establish or work with existing regional science advisory bodies (RSABs), other technical entities, such as the regional ocean observation organizations, and other organizations with relevant physical, biological, ecological, and social science expertise to provide scientific and technical oversight and support to the planning body throughout the CMS Plan development, implementation, and evaluation phases. “

3) MACOORA suggests adding specific language. The interim report specifies: “Analyze Data, Uses, Services, and Impacts. With assistance from scientific and technical experts, including the RSAB if established, the regional planning body would investigate, assess, forecast, and analyze the following: important physical and ecological patterns and processes (e.g., basic habitat distributions and critical habitat functions) that occur in the planning area, including their response to changing conditions”... as the only reference to data.

We suggest changing the wording slightly to: important physical and ecological patterns and processes using ocean observations , over time, (e.g., basic habitat distributions and critical habitat functions) that occur in the planning area, including their response to changing conditions

4) MACOORA suggests changing specific language. The interim report specifies: “Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Modify (as needed) the NOC-Certified CMS Plan. The regional planning body would have an ongoing responsibility to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the CMS Plan. The regional planning body would adapt the CMS Plan, as necessary, based on relevant changes in ecological, economic, human health, safety, security, or social conditions and information. During implementation, each region would integrate new data and scientific findings to refine regional objectives and their respective goals.

We suggest changing the wording slightly to: As new technologies are developed to observe and monitor ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes environments and their uses, they would be utilized in regional CMSP monitoring and evaluation efforts.

5) MACOORA suggests adding specific language. The interim report specifies “National CMSP Objectives, Performance Measures, and Guidance. In addition, socio-economic measures

would be developed and may include, but are not limited to: the economic value or productivity of certain economic sectors, such as commercial and recreational fisheries, aquaculture, and offshore energy; the number of recreation days; and the time required for permit applications to complete the regulatory process.”

We suggest changing the wording slightly to: In addition, socio-economic measures would be developed and may include, but are not limited to: the economic value or productivity of certain economic sectors, such as commercial and recreational fisheries, aquaculture, maritime shipping, port activity and offshore energy; the number of recreation days; and the time required for permit applications to complete the regulatory process.

6) MACOORA strongly endorses the following: “A robust national information management system dedicated to coastal and marine scientific data and information products is required to meet the diverse data and application requirements of CMSP, and the varying technical capabilities of users. The NOC, working with the regional planning bodies, would create a system that is compatible with existing Federal information systems, captures relevant Federal information resources, has effective governance and accountability across agencies, and preserves data confidentiality, where appropriate. Within this construct, Federal agencies, and the other regional partners would make relevant data, metadata, and derived products available and web accessible using recognized national and international standards and protocols.”

7) MACOORA strongly endorses the following, with added language: “*National Data and Information Management System, Prototype CMSP Portal(s) and Initial Development of Science and Information Needs Priority*. : Improve and integrate the data and information used to inform CMSP; and identify additional scientific research to support CMSP information needs.“

We suggest changing the wording slightly to: Improve and integrate the data and information used to inform CMSP; and identify additional scientific research to support CMSP information needs while building on already established capabilities, and utilizing the national portals of the regional ocean observing associations and other organizations.

MACOORA, one of eleven Regional Associations within the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), is incorporated in the state of Delaware as a 501C(3) entity. Its footprint encompasses 9 states, 66 million people, four estuaries, one of which is the world's largest, the world's largest navy base and 110 congressional districts. MACOORA's coastal communities and businesses rely on the forecasts—data and the sophisticated models that generate predictions—that come from a fully integrated coastal observing system in order to make wise, timely, and strategic decisions. MACOORA's overarching goal is to build a regional coastal ocean observing system capability, commensurate with levels of sustained funding, that provides observations, analyses, interpretations, and forecasts addressing high priority needs for both the region and the nation. www.macoora.org