



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")

April 2016 - October 2016

*submitted to the Office of Coastal Management/NOAA*

### **Mid-Atlantic Ocean Planning**

**THE PROBLEM:** Until 2009 there was no formal mechanism for Mid-Atlantic states to work together to coordinate ocean management activities and until 2013, no formal mechanism for states, federal agencies and tribes to coordinate ocean management activities. The overall decline in the health of our oceans and the increasing use conflicts in the ocean were brought into focus through the 2003 and 2004 US Ocean Commission and Pew Ocean Commission reports. Both reports also noted this lack of regional and intergovernmental coordination. No single entity bore responsibility for the overall health of the ocean and each state and federal agency tended to focus only on its own priorities. The ocean was, in essence, an orphan.

**THE FIX:** In 2008 state CZM Programs from New York to Virginia began discussing the possibility of getting their Governors to support the concept of a Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) to provide a mechanism through which the states could work together on four shared regional priorities for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean: protection of key habitats, promotion of water quality (focusing on marine debris and ocean acidification), adapting to climate changes and promoting renewable ocean energy. In 2009 all 5 state governors signed that agreement. The Virginia CZM Program immediately stepped up to initiate and fund the first ever regional ocean data portal which launched in 2010. That same year the President signed an Executive Order establishing the first ever US Ocean Policy. The Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body which includes the states, federal agencies, and tribes was formed in 2013. Virginia CZM led development of five of the six "Healthy Ocean Ecosystem" actions now in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan - one of the first two plans developed in the nation. What Virginia CZM initiated in 2009 as the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal is now the keystone and primary tool of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan.

**THE IMPACT:** Virginia CZM Program's efforts on both the portal and the development of five healthy ocean ecosystem actions in the plan have begun to fix the problem of there being no coordinated approach to regional ocean management and protecting overall ocean health. The portal has provided a single location where everyone can see where ocean resources and ocean uses are located when once you had to go to a myriad of different agencies' websites and portals to find individual pieces of the puzzle. Development of the actions to promote a healthy ocean has resulted in new relationships being formed across agencies and levels of government and with stakeholders. Providing a forum for discussion on each of these actions (identifying and assessing ecologically rich areas, mapping shifts in ocean species, developing marine debris strategies, developing an ocean acidification monitoring network and creating indicators of ocean health) has led to a deeper understanding and awareness among ocean managers and stakeholders of each sector's spatial needs and vision for how our ocean should be used and protected. Creating these inclusive work group forums has, hopefully, led to development of actions that will have strong support from both managers and stakeholders.

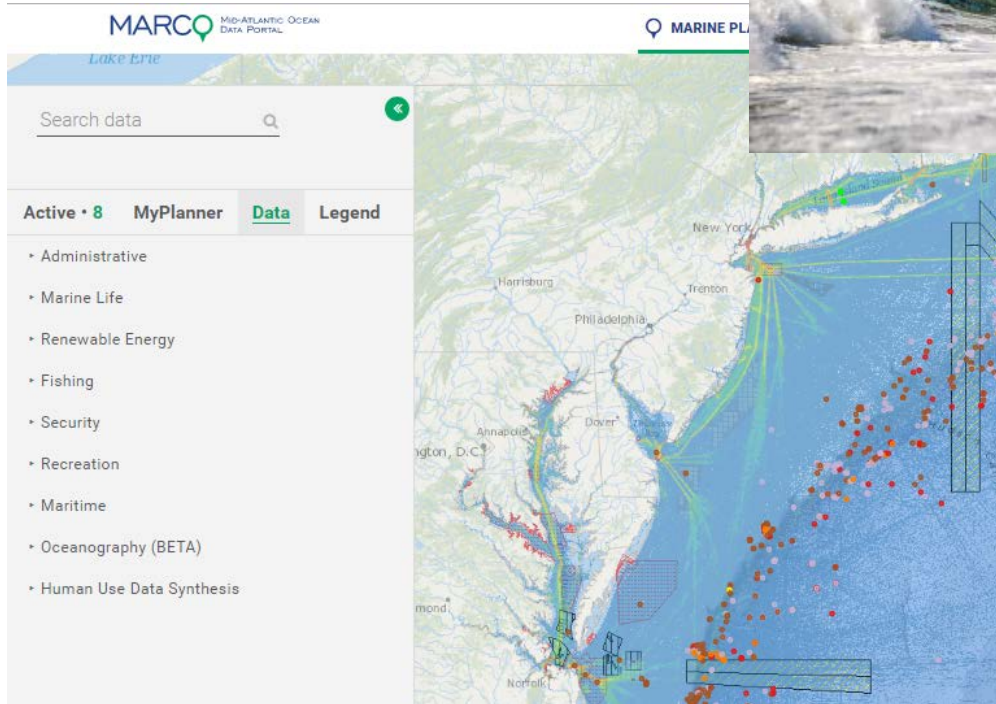
**MORE INFORMATION:**

For a copy of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan go to:

<http://www.boem.gov/MidA-New/>

To view the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal go to:

<http://midatlanticocean.org/data-portal/>

**PARTNERS:**

Virginia CZM contracted with The Nature Conservancy to create the initial versions of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

Virginia CZM worked with many members of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body, MARCO staff, Meridian staff and stakeholders in finalizing the “Healthy Ocean Ecosystem” actions for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan.

**CONTACT:**

Laura McKay, Virginia CZM Program Manager. (804)698-4323 or [Laura.McKay@deg.virginia.gov](mailto:Laura.McKay@deg.virginia.gov)