



December 6, 2018

Ms. Mary Neumayr
Council of Environmental Quality
Co-Chair, Ocean Policy Committee

Mr. Michael Kratsios
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Co-Chair, Ocean Policy Committee

Mr. Deerin Babb-Brott
Executive Director
Ocean Policy Committee

Sent via email

Dear Ms. Neumayr, Mr. Kratsios and Mr. Babb-Brott:

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), the Regional Ocean Partnership (ROP) for the New England states, respectfully submits this letter which describes regional ocean management priorities and requests continued and increased cooperation from federal agencies to advance these priorities.

NROC is a state and federal partnership that was established in 2005 by the Governors of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont to coordinate and collaborate on cross-jurisdictional ocean issues. Federal agencies have been involved as equal partners with the states since the inception of NROC. In addition to its core membership, NROC is structured to include voluntary participation from additional federal and state agencies, federally recognized tribes, the New England Fishery Management Council, and other regional partners and ocean stakeholder groups.

Ocean planning has been a priority for NROC since its formation. In recent years in New England, there has been increased interest and proposals for offshore wind and marine hydrokinetic energy generation facilities, liquified natural gas terminals, aquaculture operations, telecommunications cables, energy transmission cables, and offshore sand mining. These potential activities present new economic opportunities that need to be coordinated with important existing economic sectors, including fishing, shipping, tourism, and recreation. These new activities also need to be considered for their potential interactions with the region's unique ecological resources. As a result, marine plans for state waters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of Rhode Island have been in place since early 2010 and the State of Connecticut is currently developing a plan for its share of Long Island



Sound. Building off of these state-led efforts, and recognizing the need for better data and information, improved coordination, and enhanced stakeholder engagement in existing regulatory and management processes, NROC initiated regional ocean planning activities and established the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#) in 2009. In 2016, the Northeast Ocean Plan, which describes regional priorities and includes a series of actions to enhance regulatory decision-making around key ocean management issues in the northeast, was completed. NROC supported the five-year process that led to the Northeast Ocean Plan and continues to maintain the portal as a regional resource that is regularly and increasingly being used by thousands of private and public interests.

Since the June 19, 2018 publication of *Executive Order 13840, Ocean Policy To Advance the Economic, Security, and Environmental Interests of the United States*, NROC has held two public meetings and conducted interviews with a wide range of ocean stakeholders to obtain input on regional ocean management priorities and the appropriate structure for advancing those priorities in New England. As a result of this process, NROC affirms that it is the appropriate entity for advancing regional ocean management priorities as described in the Northeast Ocean Plan and articulated by NROC since the plan was completed. Per Sections 2(g) and 5(b) of EO 13840, we respectfully request that the interagency Ocean Policy Committee collaborate with NROC and mobilize federal agency capacity to advance the following regional ocean management priorities, which have been identified and reaffirmed through extensive engagement with stakeholders.

- Increase the reliability, accuracy, and accessibility of federal data assets that are frequently used and relied upon for offshore management, regulatory, and business decisions, specifically:
 - Fisheries data, particularly data and products derived from NOAA's Vessel Monitoring System and Vessel Trip Report databases
 - Marine transportation data, particularly data and products derived from the Automatic Identification System that is maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard
 - Marine life and habitat data, particularly data and products derived from marine wildlife monitoring and surveying efforts, such as the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center trawl and dredge surveys and the Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS)
 - Administrative, regulatory, and management area delineations, particularly those delineations that frequently change as a result of regulatory and management actions, such as fisheries management areas, designated vessel anchorage areas, ocean disposal sites, and offshore energy lease areas
 - For additional details on these and other data priorities, please see the [Northeast Ocean Data Portal Work Plan](#)



- Improve coordination and communication with the New England states for coastal seafloor mapping, research, and exploration initiatives, specifically:
 - Increase communications with the states and provide boundaries for all federal agency mapping, exploration, and research activities well in advance of conducting such activities
 - Coordinate with the states to identify needs for new topographic, bathymetric, LiDAR, and other seafloor data collection efforts
- Encourage federal agency use of best practices for decision-making that were developed in the Northeast, included in the Northeast Ocean Plan, and are being further detailed by NROC's working groups. These best practices for agency and cross-jurisdictional coordination, pre-application interactions, stakeholder engagement, and the use of best available data and information in agency decisions, will result in more efficient regulatory processes and fewer conflicts.
- Continue to support Regional Ocean Partnerships and their data portals to ensure state and regional stakeholder information and needs are incorporated into federal decisions.

We also respectfully request that the interagency Ocean Policy Committee coordinate and communicate with NROC (see most recent membership roster attached) about the details associated with each of these requests in order to benefit from nearly ten years of experience and stakeholder input on these issues. In addition to us, NROC's points of contact for regional ocean management issues include:

Ted Diers
Administrator, Watershed Bureau
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
NROC Ocean Planning Committee Co-Chair
Ted.Diers@des.nh.gov

Mel Coté,
Chief, Surface Water Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
NROC Ocean Planning Committee Co-Chair
Cote.Mel@epa.gov

Nick Napoli
Ocean Planning Director
Northeast Regional Ocean Council
nnapoli@northeastoceancouncil.org



We look forward to working with the interagency Ocean Policy Committee as it implements EO 13840 and as we advance these important regional priorities.

Sincerely, on behalf of the NROC membership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Couture", written in a cursive style.

Steve Couture
Administrator, Coastal Program
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
NROC State Co-Chair
Steven.Couture@des.nh.gov

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Regina Lyons", written in a cursive style.

Regina Lyons
Manager, Ocean and Coastal Protection Unit
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
NROC Federal Co-Chair
Lyons.Regina@epa.gov



NROC STATE MEMBERS

MAINE

Kathleen Leyden*
Maine Coastal Program
kathleen.leyden@maine.gov

Meredith Mendelson
Department of Marine Resources
meredith.mendelson@maine.gov

Matt Nixon (Alternate)
Maine Coastal Program
Matthew.E.Nixon@maine.gov

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Steve Couture* (current NROC Co-Chair)
Department of Environmental Services
steven.couture@des.nh.gov

Chris Williams (Alternate)
Department of Environmental Services
Christian.Williams@des.nh.gov

MASSACHUSETTS

Lisa Engler*
Office of Coastal Zone Management
Lisa.Engler@mass.gov

Kathryn Ford
Division of Marine Fisheries
kathryn.ford@mass.gov

RHODE ISLAND

Janet Coit
Department of Environmental Management
Janet.coit@dem.ri.gov

Grover Fugate
Coastal Resources Management Council
gfugate@crmc.ri.gov

Jeff Willis (Alternate)
Coastal Resources Management Council
jwillis@crmc.ri.gov

Robert Ballou (Alternate)
Department of Environmental Management
robert.ballou@dem.ri.gov

CONNECTICUT

Brian Thompson*
Department of Energy and Environmental
Protection
brian.thompson@ct.gov

David Blatt (Alternate)
Department of Energy and Environmental
Protection
David.blatt@ct.gov

* Member of NROC Executive Committee



NROC FEDERAL MEMBERS

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Darryl Francois
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Darryl.Francois@boem.gov

Rick Bennett*
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Rick_Bennett@fws.gov

Walter Barnhardt
US Geological Survey
wbarnhardt@usgs.gov

Leann Bullin (Alternate)
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Leann.Bullin@boem.gov

Mary Krueger (Alternate)
National Park Service
Mary_c_krueger@nps.gov

Peter Murdoch (Alternate)
US Geological Survey
pmurdoch@usgs.gov

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Regina Lyons* (current NROC Co-Chair)
US EPA Region One
Lyons.Regina@epamail.epa.gov

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Betsy Nicholson*
Office for Coastal Management
betsy.nicholson@noaa.gov

Chris Boelke (alternate)
National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
christopher.boelke@noaa.gov

Ellen Mecray (Alternate)
National Climate Data Center
ellen.l.mecray@noaa.gov

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Christine Clarke
Natural Resources Conservation Service
christine.clarke@ma.usda.gov

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Lawrence Oliver
US Army Corps of Engineers
lawrence.r.oliver@usace.army.mil

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Michele DesAutels
US Coast Guard First District
Michele.E.DesAutels@uscg.mil

* Member of NROC Executive Committee