

## NROC Tribal Caucus | Proposed Terms of Reference

### **OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of the Tribal Caucus (Caucus) within the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) is to coordinate collaboration across Tribes and enhance communication and understanding of Tribal priorities in voluntary government to government (Tribe to Tribe) consultation. The Caucus will identify gaps in knowledge and needs, prioritize funding that benefits Tribes, and enhance communication and support between Tribes and federal and state partners. The Caucus will also coordinate Tribal guidance on NROC priorities and the implementation of specific NROC projects. NROC will provide a forum to host discussions on data, information gaps, water quality, renewable energy, technical assistance needs, development of co-stewardship/co-management agreements, opportunities for youth and early career development, and other emerging, Tribally-identified topics. Additionally, NROC will provide technical assistance to Tribes on priorities such as geospatial data, funding opportunities, water quality, and renewable energy and development. Overall, the Caucus will elevate Tribal priorities within the three NROC committees: Coastal Hazards Resilience, Ocean Planning, and Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health.

### **ENTITIES ENGAGED | ALL ARE WELCOME**

Tribes, Tribal members, or Tribal representatives within the Northeast region or with an interest in coastal and offshore ocean management issues in the Northeast are welcome to join Caucus meetings. Tribal Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Offices are encouraged to participate.

### **OUTCOMES OF THE TRIBAL CAUCUS**

Regional coordination of Tribes through enhanced learning, communication and support  
 Identify priorities of concern for Tribes and address knowledge gaps  
 Gain a deeper understanding of Tribal priorities through increased participation and engagement  
 Enhance Tribal voices in NROC's committees  
 Increase partnership with Tribes in the ocean and coastal space

### **PROPOSAL AND SCOPE**

NROC would establish a Tribal Caucus with the entities listed to inform, learn, and collaborate in voluntary government to government (Tribe to Tribe) consultation on Tribal priorities, opportunities, and considerations. Caucus members will be asked to participate in discussions of priorities including technical assistance needs, data management and mapping, water quality concerns and mitigation techniques, offshore development, coastal resiliency, coastal biodiversity and other emerging concerns.

Caucus members will be asked to attend meetings focused on discussions around data, information gaps, funding opportunities, and communication around specific priorities. They will be asked to commit to coordination, collaboration, learning and support in the process and discussion of a range of topics for consideration within and beyond the scope of NROC's three committees: Coastal Hazards Resilience, Ocean Planning, and Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health. The focus includes the elevation of Tribal priorities and voices within these spaces, ensuring Tribal outcomes for NROC's projects, as well as enhanced partnerships with Tribal, federal, and state entities in the northeast region towards a more active Tribal engagement in co-stewardship/co-management approach in line with the Administration's agenda.

### **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

The Tribal Caucus will meet every other month virtually and annually in-person. The in-person meeting will rotate between Tribal communities to learn about the host and their efforts.

### **ENGAGEMENT WITH NROC COMMITTEES**

NROC currently has three Committees - Coastal Hazards Resilience, Ocean Planning, and Coastal and Ocean Ecosystem Health. These Committees are managed by Co-Chairs and NROC staff, who meet monthly to guide the implementation of NROC's work plan and funded projects. Each Committee could have a Tribal Co-Chair, if desired. Committee Co-Chairs also participate in NROC's monthly Executive Committee meetings, which oversees the management of NROC. Tribal Co-Chairs will be determined based on consensus of the Caucus and not a formal vote.

### **SPECIFIC PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED (TO DATE)**

The Caucus provides an opportunity to hear from all Tribal projects and priorities. Specific projects include:

1. *Water quality* – the loss of water quality integrity due to lack of infrastructure, development, industry, pollution, and climate change
2. *Renewable energy and offshore development* – engagement in the wind energy deployment process, sharing lessons learned from Tribes in previously developed regions, future ocean planning concerns
3. *Coastal and submerged archaeological and cultural resources* – identification and protection of cultural resources in the coastal and offshore areas
4. *Culturally significant wildlife and habitats* – potential impacts to or the loss of culturally significant fish and wildlife due to bycatch, industry, climate change, or degradation of aquatic connectivity
5. *Biodiversity of coastal ecosystems* – identification and protection of natural and cultural resources that support subsistent lifeways and are within the coastal and offshore areas
6. *Tribal youth engagement* – involving the future generation in discussions and projects