



NROC Meeting May 15, 2025

**Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
89 Depot Road, Greenland, NH 03840**

Briefing Book

Virtual Access Details, p. 6

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Participant Agenda

Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) Thursday, May 15, 2025 Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve 89 Depot Rd, Greenland, NH 03840	
9:00 AM	Welcome and Overview of Meeting Agenda <i>NROC Co-Chairs: Brian Thompson (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection - CT DEEP) and Regina Lyons (Environmental Protection Agency - EPA)</i>
9:15 AM	Updates from the NROC Executive Committee and Federal, State, and Tribal Partners <i>Brian Thompson (CT DEEP), Regina Lyons (EPA), and NROC state, federal, and Tribal partners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NROC Co-Chairs and Executive Committee Updates • Key highlights from NROC federal partners • Key highlights from NROC state partners • Key highlights from NROC Tribal partners and the NROC Tribal Caucus
10:00 AM	NROC Partner Updates and Opportunities for Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northeast Sea Grant Consortium, <i>Erik Chapman (NH SeaGrant)</i> • Northeast Regional Association of Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS), <i>Jake Kritzer</i> • Gulf of Maine Council, <i>Steve Couture (NH Department of Environmental Services – NH DES)</i>
10:15 AM	Break
10:30 AM	Ocean Planning Committee <i>NROC Co-Chairs: Ted Diers (NH DES) and Lou Chiarella (NOAA Fisheries)</i> <i>NROC Staff: Amy Trice, Senior Program Director for Ocean Planning and Coastal and Ocean Ecosystem Health; and Emily Shumchenia, Science and NE Ocean Data Portal Director</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief project updates, <i>Amy Trice (NROC)</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NROC Submerged Archaeological and Cultural Resources Workgroup – update on literature review, the identification of coastal and submerged coastal resource assessments, and potential data products. ○ Industry outreach regarding spatial and economic data needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maritime – status of outreach to the ports and sectors in USCG District One and summary of feedback to date. ▪ Commercial fishing – status of commercial fishing data updates. ▪ Recreational boating – status of outreach to the recreational boating sector and summary of feedback to date.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent and emerging ocean planning issues - updates and input on NROC's role, including data and coordination, for the following emerging offshore activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freshwater aquifer research Submarine cables Sand, sediment, and mineral exploration UAVs and AVs for security, research, and maritime operations Others? Redesigned Northeast Ocean Data Portal, <i>Emily Shumchenia (NROC)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration and feedback on the redesigned Portal to be publicly released in June Participant input on additional proposed projects or agency regulatory or management actions that could be featured on the Portal NROC/MARCO data governance and management, <i>Emily Shumchenia (NROC)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on the status of work with partners to assess existing data streams and repositories and make recommendations for improved data management and accessibility Case studies of how current data management is limiting project, management, and research effectiveness Participant input on the potential economic and resource management benefits of improving the data management infrastructure
12:00 PM	<p>Lunch (provided)</p> <p>Acknowledging Twenty Years Since NROC was Established by the New England Governors in 2005</p>
1:00 PM	<p>Coastal Hazards Resilience Committee <i>NROC Co-Chairs: Julia Knisel (MA Office of Coastal Zone Management - MA CZM), Gavin Jackson (CT DEEP), and Dani Boudreau (NOAA National Ocean Service – NOAA NOS)</i> <i>Staff: Joan LeBlanc, Coastal Hazards Resilience Program Director</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief update on water level water monitoring network implementation and upcoming workshop in collaboration with NERACOOS, <i>Dani Boudreau (NOAA NOS)</i> Update on recent and upcoming Living Shorelines work in collaboration with TNC, <i>Dani Boudreau (NOAA NOS)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on recent on-site living shoreline training workshops and webinars Identification of potential sites and technical support needs for future living shorelines implementation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participant input regarding maps and resources to be developed for the Portal to highlight living shorelines projects and to provide economic and environmental context for current and potential future sites
1:30 PM	<p>Implementing <i>Maine Won't Wait</i> through Innovation in Municipal Training and Technical Assistance (TA)</p> <p><i>Rachael Hamilton, NOAA Coastal Management Fellow, Maine Coastal Program</i></p>
1:50 PM	Break
2:00 PM	<p>Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee (OCEH)</p> <p><u>NROC Co-Chairs:</u> <i>Steve Couture (NH DES), Regina Lyons (EPA), Devon Gleason (Penobscot Indian Nation), Prassede Vella (MassBays NEP), and Jake Kritzer (NERACOOS)</i></p> <p><u>Staff:</u> <i>Amy Trice, Senior Program Director for Ocean Planning and Coastal and Ocean Ecosystem Health</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project updates, <i>Amy Trice (NROC)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Summary of efforts to obtain State, Federal, and Industry input on data products to be developed from the ocean acidification monitoring network ○ HCOM: Update on seafloor mapping priorities and recent and planned seafloor mapping in the region • Coastal and Submerged Vegetation Workgroup, <i>Brian Yellen (UMass Amherst)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Summary of the workgroup terms of reference and participation ○ Update on mapping and modeling activities ○ Participant input on Federal, State, Tribal, and local outreach to inform products and uses of products
3:00 PM	Adjourn

Virtual Access Information

Topic: NROC May 2025 Meeting

Time: May 15, 2025 09:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9223915888?pwd=tggbXBOnXA2Tfk9wWDkZOTaAcDcW7i.1&omn=87372260392>

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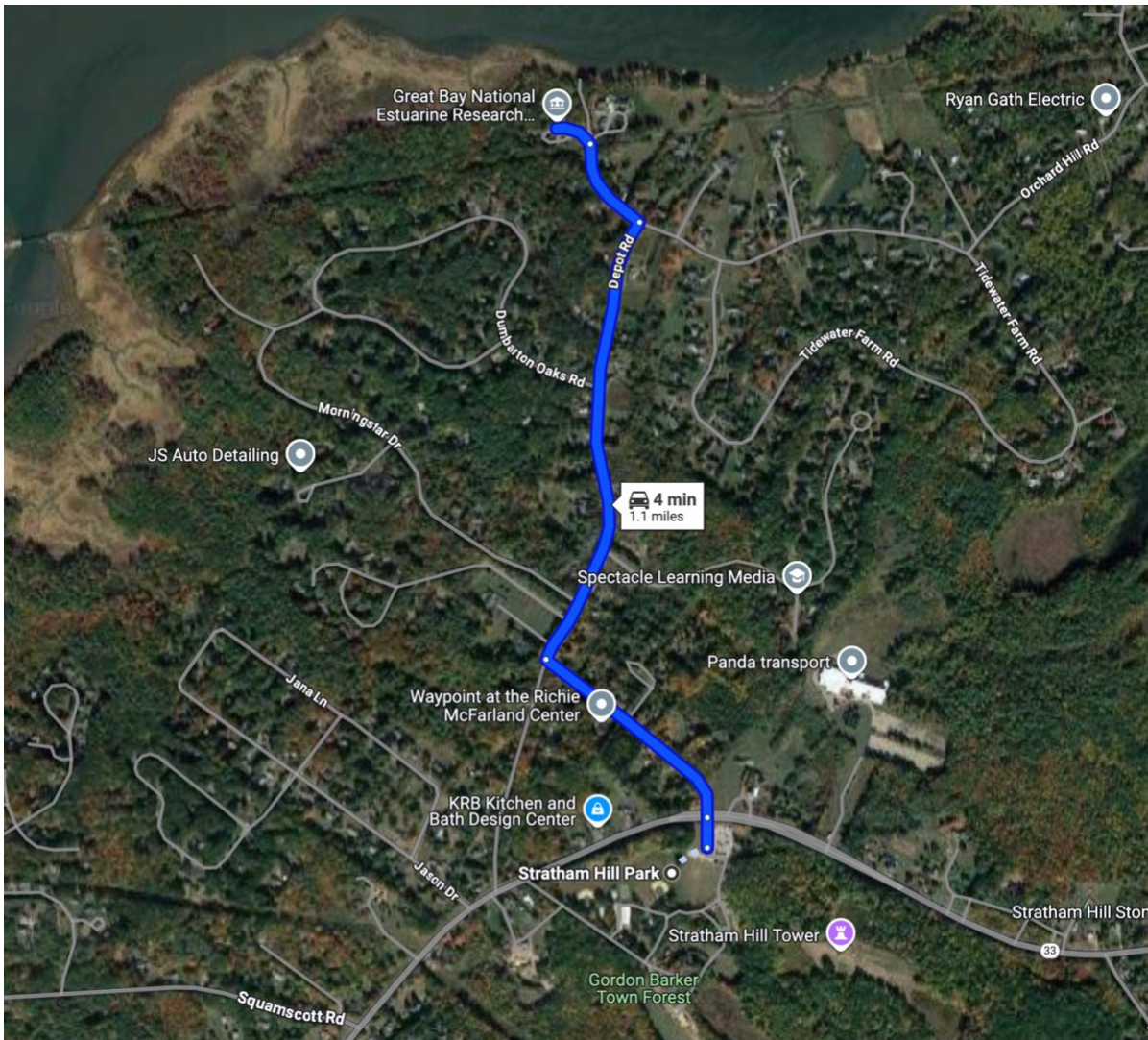
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Parking Information

Parking is available at the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve at 89 Depot Road, Greenland, NH 03840, but it may be limited. Please consider carpooling to the meeting or parking at Stratham Hill Park (270 Portsmouth Avenue, Stratham, NH 03885) and carpooling to the Great Bay NERR. The parking lot at Stratham Hill Park is just over a mile from the venue. See map below.



Briefing Materials

NROC Executive Committee – NROC Funding Status Update – May 2025

NROC Funding from Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

1. NOAA-NOS-OCM-2022-2007464
 - Project: *Implementation and Coordination of Coastal and Ocean Management Priorities for the Northeastern United States via the Northeast Regional Ocean Council*
 - Total Award: \$3,924,563
 - Leads: NROC (via Coastal States Stewardship Foundation as fiscal sponsor). Projects are led by the NROC Executive Committee, Coastal Hazards Resilience Committee (CHRC), Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee (OCEH), and Ocean Planning Committee (OPC)
 - Funding Period: December 2022 - November 2025
2. NOAA-NOS-OCM-2024-2008310
 - Project: *Implementation and Coordination of Coastal and Ocean Management Priorities for the Northeastern United States via the Northeast Regional Ocean Council*
 - Total Award: \$1,963,233
 - Leads: NROC (via Coastal States Stewardship Foundation as fiscal sponsor). Projects are led by the NROC Executive Committee, Coastal Hazards Resilience Committee (CHRC), Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee (OCEH), and Ocean Planning Committee (OPC)
 - Funding Period: December 2024 - November 2025

Ocean Planning Committee

3. Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management
 - Project: *Operations and maintenance of the Northeast Ocean Data Portal*
 - Award: \$225,000
 - Lead: NROC (via Coastal States Stewardship Foundation as fiscal sponsor)
 - Funding Period: September 2024 – September 2025 (with two additional option years)
4. FY2024 NOAA Regional Ocean Data Sharing/Regional Ocean Partnership Funding
 - Project: *Update fishing, marine life and habitat, recreation, maritime, seafloor, and other data on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal*
 - Award: \$205,000
 - Lead: NROC (via Coastal States Stewardship Foundation as fiscal sponsor)
 - Funding Period: August 2024 – November 2025

Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (Co-hosted with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean)

The Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) is funded through a mix of member dues, in-kind contributions, projects, and research funding.

Current Funding

As of May 1, 2025, in FY 2025 (July 1 2024 – June 30 2025), RWSC received \$360,000 in membership dues from 18 individual entities (states, eNGOs, industry). RWSC also receives in-kind staff time from NROC, MARCO, and NOAA Fisheries, and funding for the following projects and research:

1. *Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative support to provide resources for research planning and coordination (development of RWSC Research Planning Map)*
 - a. Funder: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
 - b. Award: \$450,000
 - c. Funding Period: August 2023 – July 2026
2. *Implementing the POWERON Program*
 - a. Funder: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
 - b. Award: \$3,999,835.77
 - c. Funding Period: October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2028

Project Notes: RWSC is administering and managing funds to support the long-term deployment of passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) sensors and data management for baleen whales up and down the Atlantic coast, as informed by the RWSC Marine Mammal Subcommittee (<https://rwsc.org/pam>). [RWSC invited proposals](#) for a contractor/team to support the deployment of PAM units and data management activities in late February 2025. The selected entity will provide a presentation at the Marine Mammal Subcommittee meeting on [May 21, 2025](#).

3. *Support for the administration and coordination of regional research associated with NYSERDA's regional monitoring requirement*
 - a. Funder: Equinor
 - b. Award: \$4,050,000.00
 - c. Funding Period: February 5, 2025 – February 4, 2031

Project Notes: RWSC is administering and managing funds to support regional scale research, specifically to support NYSERDA's regional research requirement for state projects. RWSC developed a request for proposals informed by the seven RWSC Subcommittees, four Sector Caucuses, and Steering Committee. [Concept papers were invited in late February 2025](#) and a subset were selected to submit full proposals by June 2.

4. *Support for publicly sharing data from the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium and the Maine Offshore Wind Research Array through a Maine Offshore Wind Research Data Catalog in fulfillment of State law and the State's federal research lease*
 - a. Funder: Maine Governor's Energy Office
 - b. Award: \$100,000.00
 - c. Funding Period: April 7, 2025 – December 31, 2026

Project Notes: RWSC is assisting Maine in establishing, launching, and maintaining a Maine Offshore Wind Research Data Catalog that will display and link to the datasets being collected offshore Maine associated with the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium and the Maine Offshore Wind Research Array. RWSC will support infrastructure improvements for individual high-priority repositories (e.g., OBIS-SEAMAP, Regional Seafloor Data Repository, North American Bat Monitoring Program) to directly connect to a Catalog that is compatible with the regional ocean data catalog concept being piloted by RWSC, NROC, and MARCO.

Pending Funding

5. *Membership dues:* RWSC is currently fundraising to support its Annual Work Plan for FY 2026 and has secured commitments from a dozen entities (states, eNGOs, industry). RWSC expects a reduction in operational funding for FY 2026 and a continuation in projects and research funding.
6. *Marine Life and Habitat Research Funding:* RWSC convenes annual funding strategy meetings for federal agencies, states, eNGOs, and industry to increase collaboration around deploying research funding to ensure that it results in high quality data and research outputs. RWSC is currently assisting funders (e.g., states, eNGOs, industry) with decisions related to project selection and funding allocation, and is providing input on funding agreements to ensure robust data management and data availability. RWSC has been asked to serve as an aggregator, coordinator, and manager of funds from multiple sources in the future as entities seek to leverage each other's resources and maximize the value obtained from research dollars.

NROC Tribal Caucus

The Tribal Caucus, established in 2024, has been meeting regularly to advance Tribal priorities related to coastal and ocean management, to provide opportunities for Tribes to make recommendations about NROC projects, and to facilitate coordination around Tribal issues. NROC's Tribal Engagement Coordinator convenes the Tribal Caucus every two months.

The Tribal Caucus has been focusing on advancing the following priorities during the last several meetings:

- Developing a regional map of herring runs and connecting the map to associated information and resources
- Identifying youth and early career opportunities for Tribal members
- Understanding Tribes' needs for geospatial data and data management
- Providing input on the maps of historical territories and languages that are compiled by *Native Lands Digital*
- Providing feedback on NROC projects

NROC also recently hired a part-time Tribal Technical Assistance Specialist to support the Tribal Engagement Coordinator in addressing these priorities and the other technical assistance needs of Tribes.

Committee Updates

Ocean Planning Committee

Submitted by Amy Trice, NROC Senior Program Director and Emily Shumchenia, NROC Science Director and RWSC Director

Industry and Expert Vetted Data Products

The [Northeast Ocean Data Portal](#) includes over 6,000 spatial data layers from federal, state, industry, researcher, and other regional sources on the ocean economy, ecosystems, and culture of the Northeast. In order to maintain the best available data and information, NROC staff are convening discussions at the request of industry, regional partners, and agencies to inform the development of specific data products such as maps, tools, and applications for visualizing and using regionally-relevant data for ocean and coastal management, planning, and permitting.

NROC is conducting outreach to the ports and maritime, recreational boating, and the commercial and recreational fishing industries to develop datasets that are defined by the industry for use in business and planning decisions.

Next Steps

- **Ports and Maritime** – Meetings are ongoing with US Coast Guard District, Headquarters, and Navigation Center staff as well as state and regional maritime groups and harbor safety committees. The Data Portal team is working to integrate relevant data from the USCG Maritime Safety Information Products website. The Coast Guard First District [Coastal Buoy Modernization Initiative Proposal](#) was also recently posted on the Data Portal to inform public comment by June 13.
- **Recreational Boating** – A framework for engaging national, regional, and state boating groups is now defined. Specific agendas and questions for each industry meeting are in development with the objective of obtaining industry recommendations on the appropriate methodologies to develop data and information that represents the importance of the industry.
- **Commercial and Recreational Fishing** – Fishing data are being reorganized by fishery (instead of by data type) on the Data Portal in response to industry feedback. The Data Portal team is also working with NOAA Fisheries to integrate recent fishing footprint data and to identify and develop potential new products. We are also obtaining industry input on methods for mapping the footprint of recreational fishing and recently integrated data from the Northeast Regional Marine Fish Habitat Assessment produced by New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.

Seafloor Planning Workgroup

NROC's Ocean Planning Committee (OPC) recently met to discuss a range of topics related to offshore planning issues in New England. Specifically, the OPC discussed current or planned activities in New England that would benefit from additional data and information or interjurisdictional coordination. This includes a range of activities related to seafloor planning, including moving or installing submarine cables for telecommunications, planning for other submarine cables, boulder relocation, assessing sediment and mineral resources, and seafloor exploration and research. Given NROC's work to develop industry and expert vetted data and these ongoing or planned activities, a decision was made to move forward with a Seafloor Planning Workgroup. The Workgroup will inform seafloor planning by improving the collective understanding of data and information needs, assessments, and related engagement that is or will be occurring in New England and by providing a forum for coordination and outreach. Post NROC Spring Meeting, we will begin advancing this Workgroup and request specific NROC Member participation.

Submerged Archeological and Cultural Resources Workgroup

At the request of Tribes, states, and federal agency OPC members, the Submerged Archaeological and Cultural Resources Workgroup is focusing on coordinating regional approaches to assessing archeological and cultural resources, identifying information gaps, and initiating projects that will improve the collective understanding and the use of information in management, decision making, and permitting. The geographic focus of this work is coastal areas and state and federal waters from Maine through Connecticut and potentially including New York. A Request for Information was published last fall to solicit interest from entities with expertise to advance these topics. We are now moving forward with a literature review and synthesis of existing literature on historical sea levels, marine archaeology, geological and geophysical survey data, paleolandscape reconstructions, seafloor mapping, and sea-level modeling specific to the study area. A synthesis of information and geospatial data related to ongoing archaeological studies along the Northeast coast is also being conducted. Results of this work will inform future data development for the Northeast Ocean Data Portal for planning, management, and permitting.

Northeast Ocean Data Portal

- The Portal team continues to conduct outreach and data development throughout the region to support data access and use in planning and decision making by businesses, government, and researchers.
- Recent Portal data updates include:
 - [Data to support Coast Guard First District Coastal Buoy Modernization Initiative Proposal](#)
 - [Data to support Public Comment Opportunity: New England Shelf Hydrogeology Expedition](#)
 - [Reorganized Data for Marine Endangered Species Critical Habitats](#)
 - [New and Updated Seafloor Datasets](#)
- NROC is in the process of launching designed and updated Portal websites and tools. The effort follows significant increases in Portal use and many new website and mapping requirements since the last complete overhaul and redesign in 2017. The Portal team held public webinars to launch the project and get input from users in January 2024 and again in [April 2025](#) to provide a preview of the draft updates and tools. At the May NROC meeting, staff will provide a final preview/demonstration of the website before launch.

Data Management and Governance

- NROC and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) have been working with federal agencies, states, Tribes, industry, and researchers to develop industry- and peer-reviewed data products from existing data streams to be provided via the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portals for two decades. NROC and MARCO are also supporting specific recent efforts to characterize the data landscape with respect to offshore fisheries, wildlife, and environmental data by the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) and Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA).
- Each organization convenes Committees, and working groups of experts to (1) identify ocean data needs and uses; (2) develop maps, data products, and other information to serve these needs; (3) Assess data management infrastructure for related existing, growing, and new data streams, including data standardization and archiving practices; (4) Recommend data management practices to improve data storage and access; (5) Track and coordinate existing and planned data collection and research activities.

- From all the Committees and working groups, we have built an understanding of the research and data collection activities across regions, the analysis and data product development procedures in use, and the quality and capacity of data management, storage, and accessibility. This understanding includes specific examples of challenges and how those challenges are currently inhibiting use of ocean data and decision-making for data types such as but not limited to seafloor data, fisheries data, oceanography data, marine life observations, and agency actions.
- NROC and MARCO invite participants to share examples about how data management deficiencies have inhibited data use and/or case studies about the need for reliable ocean data. NROC and MARCO are seeking funds to enhance ocean data management processes and infrastructure, in collaboration with the many partners who provide, manage, and use ocean data.

Coastal Hazards Resilience Committee

Submitted by Joan LeBlanc, NROC Coastal Hazards Resilience Program Director

Advancing Living Shorelines in New England

NROC is working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, the Consensus Building Institute, state coastal managers, and other partners to advance implementation of successful living shorelines projects in New England by increasing understanding of regulatory issues, monitoring techniques, siting, design, and application of living shorelines approaches.

During 2025, NROC, TNC and regional partners hosted a series of in-depth training workshops and instructional site-visits, and a follow up webinar to share technical knowledge, design strategies, and lessons learned about living shorelines in New England. More than 130 coastal practitioners participated in the following in-person workshops:

- Stratford Point Living Shoreline Project, CT (March 25, 2025)
- Watson Park Stabilization and Coastal Resilience Project, Braintree, MA (April 2, 2025)
- Dune Restoration Project, Wells, ME (April 8, 2025)



An additional 140+ people participated in a webinar hosted on April 29, 2025 to hear about lessons learned from the workshops. Resources from the workshops and webinar will be made available on the NROC website.

Next Steps

- NROC and TNC will provide expert design and planning technical support for up to 10 new living shorelines projects throughout the New England region. A call for potential project locations will take place this summer.
- NROC will develop a new living shorelines theme on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal to provide access to maps of current projects, locations where potential or planned projects could be implemented, and resources for practitioners.

For Reference

NROC's current project builds on previous multi-year efforts to work with The Nature Conservancy and regional partners to advance living shorelines in the region. Links to reports associated with this effort are available at:

- Living Shorelines in New England: Site Characterization and Performance Monitoring Guidance (2022)
<https://www.northeastoceancouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Living-Shorelines-Site-Characterization-and-Performance-Monitoring-Guidance-2022.pdf>

- Regulatory Challenges and Opportunities for Living Shorelines in New England (2022) https://www.northeastoceancouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Regulatory-Challenges-and-Opportunities-for-Living-Shorelines-in-New-England_2022.03.04-1.pdf
- Case Studies: Living Shorelines in New England (2022) <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/protect-water-and-land/land-and-water-stories/northeast-living-shorelines-case-studies/>
- Piloting Living Shorelines in New England (2021) <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/protect-water-and-land/land-and-water-stories/northeast-living-shorelines/>
- Living Shorelines in New England: State of the Practice (2017) http://www.northeastoceancouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Final_StateofthePractice_7.2017.pdf

For more information about NROC's efforts to advance living shorelines, please contact:

- Joan LeBlanc, NROC, jleblanc@northeastoceancouncil.org
- Steve Kirk, The Nature Conservancy, stephen.kirk@TNC.ORG

Establishing a Water Level Sensor Network in New England

NROC, NERACOOS and other partners have established a water level monitoring network to enhance coastal resilience by improving access, quality, and coverage of water level observations throughout the Northeast. The network provides tools and resources to help coastal managers plan and respond to increasing impacts from coastal storms and flooding.

- The network hosted a technology workshop to increase knowledge about tools, techniques, best practices, and methods for collecting and reporting real time water level data.
- NROC and partners conducted outreach throughout New England to identify existing water level monitoring stations and identify potential locations for new sensors to fill monitoring gaps and address key regional and community priorities.
- The project team developed a [map of water level sites](#) to highlight existing, planned, and proposed water level monitoring stations throughout New England.
- Several new water level monitoring sensors have been installed at priority locations.
- NERACOOS and GMRI launched a [water level dashboard](#) that coastal managers and members of the public can utilize to access real-time data from water level sensors.
- The network regularly convenes coastal managers to understand monitoring needs, provide support for operations, identify locations for future monitoring, and advance tools for reporting and analysis of water level data.

Next Steps

- NROC and NERACOOS will host an in-person **Water Level Monitoring Workshop on August 7, 2025** at the NH Department of Environmental Services, Portsmouth, NH to:
 - Share lessons learned regarding water level sensor implementation, types of sensors, and matching sensors with community needs;
 - Review best practices for sensor deployment, and surveys; and
 - Assess data management and reporting products to identify future needs and direction for data product development.

- Project partners will continue installing water level sensors and working with local points of contact to further develop specific installation locations and procedures.
- NROC will continue to provide a regional forum for site selection, knowledge sharing, and opportunities to further develop a regional network of water level sensors in New England.
- NROC and NERACOOS will develop data products and enhance the water level data visualization tool in response to feedback from coastal and community managers.

For more information about NROC's water level sensor project, please contact:

- Joan LeBlanc, NROC, jleblanc@northeastoceancouncil.org
- Anna Simpson, NERACOOS, anna@neracoos.org

Hosting a Coastal Resilience Exchange

NROC's CHR Committee provides a regional forum for coastal managers and partners to advance community resilience by hosting 'resilience exchanges' to share tools, resources, case studies, and approaches for protecting coastal resources. Priorities include:

- Hosting workshops to share knowledge about latest tools and resources for responding to challenges associated with coastal storm surge, flooding, or sea level rise.
- Convening partners to share information and improve understanding of emerging issues and approaches.
- Convening roundtable discussions among coastal managers and partners to share updates about coastal resilience projects, strategies, planning, and funding opportunities.

During NROC's fall 2024 meeting, CHR resilience exchanges focused on NOAA's Sea Level Calculator, advancing resilience through proactive coastal relocation, and hosting a roundtable for state coastal managers and other NROC partners to share updates about coastal resilience projects, planning, and funding opportunities. This spring, CHR hosted a session with NROC's tribal caucus to highlight coastal resilience funding opportunities in Massachusetts.

Next Steps

- NROC will collect and share coastal resilience-related tools and resources via the NROC website to promote knowledge exchange across New England.
- NROC will continue to provide a 'resilience exchange' and related convenings for information sharing, understanding of emerging issues, and linking NROC's coastal resilience-related projects (e.g. water level sensors, living shorelines, blue carbon, Portal) to Tribal, state, and federal activities.

For more information about NROC's coastal resilience exchange, please contact:

Joan LeBlanc, NROC, jleblanc@northeastoceancouncil.org

Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee

Submitted by Amy Trice, NROC Senior Program Director

Habitat Classification and Ocean Mapping Subcommittee

The Habitat Classification and Ocean Mapping (HCOM) Subcommittee coordinates to determine and update seafloor mapping needs in the region with the intent to acquire high-quality regional seafloor data to produce regional mapping products for ongoing and emerging management challenges. Working with regional partners, HCOM is currently updating seafloor mapping priorities for the Northeast to inform and guide state and federal investments in seafloor mapping and characterization. HCOM's current work is focusing on understanding shifts in data and product needs as mapping in the region occurs, outreach to additional sectors and regional partners to identify mapping needs, and coordination with researchers, data collectors, and technology providers to better understand options for seafloor data applications. The Data Portal team is also working with Maine DMR to add data from recently mapped areas in the Gulf of Maine onto the Portal.

Next steps

- Since the NROC Fall Meeting, HCOM has updated the regional seafloor mapping priorities given ongoing mapping activities and development in the region. Draft maps of priorities from the individual entities who participated in the November HCOM Meeting are now available for review. NROC staff are now planning specific outreach to those partners who did not participate in November and will conduct outreach to additional sectors to identify seafloor mapping needs.
- A brief review of the updated maps will be highlighted at the Spring Meeting; additional vetting of those maps will take place over the summer.

Coastal Vegetation Workgroup

The Coastal Vegetation Workgroup recently updated its purpose and scope to address current science and management needs in New England. The Workgroup will meet formally later this month with the aim of expanding the focus. A presentation during the NROC Spring Meeting will outline the updated purpose and scope as well as recent research and modeling by UMass Amherst.

Purpose and objective of the workgroup

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council's Coastal Vegetation Workgroup promotes regional understanding of soil, biogeochemical processing, and coastal vegetation through the coordination and convening of experts. Coastal Vegetation data and data products are being shared publicly on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal (see <https://www.northeastoceandata.org/eelgrass>). Through this Workgroup, NROC provides a regional venue for information sharing, including lessons learned from previous or ongoing work, identifying data and information needs that could be pursued to better inform management of coastal sediments, soils, and vegetative communities. The objectives of the Workgroup are to:

- Coordinate between federal and state scientists, academic scientists, and managers
- Identify critical knowledge gaps and management-relevant data products
- Advance knowledge of Northeast US coastal sediment biogeochemical processes

Entities engaged in the workgroup

The following entities have engaged in previous iterations of the Workgroup and/or will be invited to participate in the reinvigorated Workgroup to further define outcomes, timelines, and participants:

- State coastal management programs, environmental management, fisheries, and wildlife agencies
- Tribal environmental offices via NROC's Tribal Caucus

- University research partners
- Regional partners and non-profit organizations
- Federal agencies:
 - DOI: USGS, USFWS
 - USDA: NRCS
 - EPA
 - NOAA

Scope of the workgroup

NROC convenes the Coastal Vegetation Workgroup under the Ocean and Coastal Ecosystem Health Committee. Entities engaged in the Workgroup commit to coordination, collaboration, and engagement in the process to discuss, develop, and maintain data and information related to seagrass and marsh resilience. The geographic focus of NROC coordination on submerged aquatic vegetation is in coastal and estuarine waters of the Northeast, from Maine through Long Island Sound, but the Workgroup may leverage methodologies and expertise (i.e., inviting participation) from outside of this geography. The Workgroup is led by NROC staff on behalf of NROC members with support from three thematic leads:

- Vegetation mapping lead – coordinate characterization of soil properties and extents
- Soil biogeochemical lead – biogeochemical processing in the coastal zone allowing for fluxes of material via gas or aqueous phase to the atmosphere or coastal ocean
- Policy lead – translate new knowledge into actionable decision-making frameworks

The Workgroup would focus on the following priorities:

1. Providing a venue for collaboration, information sharing, and lessons learned.
2. Identifying new or updated data that will improve existing data products as well as data and information gaps that hinder understanding of important habitats and limit decision making.
3. Advancing data development or data collection for those defined gaps.
4. Understanding research, assessments, and models that are being advanced by any of the member participants.
5. Integrating relevant research and information into the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, where appropriate.
6. Others as identified by the Workgroup.

Meeting frequency

Every other month and on an as needed basis for specific outcomes and timelines. There may be a need for science-focused meetings to review and discuss data and methods, as well as more integrated meetings where data products are reviewed and discussed with managers and decision makers. The Workgroup will also regularly convene workshops (e.g., annually) to engage broader audiences, for example via spring/fall NROC Meetings.

Background and recent related work

- Background on [updating and enhancing coastal vegetation](#) datasets on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal
- EPA [Press Release](#) on coastal and marine salt marshes and seagrass report
- Maps [depicting coastal vegetation](#) from Maine to Long Island
- Maps [highlighting high-resolution](#) Northeast salt marsh and soil properties
- Centralized [source of eelgrass maps and data](#) in the northeastern US

Ocean Acidification

Coordination across NROC, the Northeast Coastal Acidification Network (NECAN), and Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing System (NERACOOS) identified monitoring and data priorities through a region-wide workshop and report. NROC is advancing key recommendations outlined in the [Monitoring Plan](#) by working to develop an ocean acidification data theme on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal in response to the need highlighted by industry and regional partners. NERACOOS/NECAN will continue to focus on research and monitoring questions related to ocean acidification whereas NROC will focus on the application of data collected for tools and data products that inform business and management decisions. This application for business and management decisions is the focus of ocean acidification theme development on the Data Portal.

Next steps

- NROC staff are currently conducting outreach to managers, planners, researchers, and representatives of the aquaculture and fishing industries to better understand data requirements for permitting, siting, and monitoring.
- Questions for managers and industry include:
 - What are the species of concern as it relates to ocean acidification in New England for your program and why (i.e., lobsters, oysters, scallops, others)? What specific management/regulatory activities apply?
 - What types of maps, tools, or data products could help inform your agency's engagement in those management activities? Specifically, information beyond the monitoring being conducted in specific locations – for example, maps of ocean acidification concentrations and risks to individual species sensitivity?
 - Have efforts been employed to map species and areas that are increasingly vulnerable to ocean acidification in New England? If so, who were these efforts carried out by? What types of data were collected to support their characterization as vulnerable? Where are these data/products stored?
 - Anything additional you want to discuss related to management needs? Are there others in your state/agency we should engage?
- Post Spring Meeting, we will engage researchers and other experts to inform the identification of ocean acidification thresholds for key species, particularly commercially valued species such as oysters, scallops, and lobster. We will also continue our outreach with managers and industry experts.

Updates from NROC Partners

Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

GOMC Leadership

The Gulf of Maine Council is currently led by the New Hampshire Secretariat in partnership with USGS from July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2026.

January 2025 GOMC Meeting

The Gulf of Maine Council hosted a half-day virtual meeting on January 13, 2025. The following key issues were covered during the meeting:

- Ocean acidification monitoring priorities for the Northeast US and Eastern Canada
- Regional assessment of offshore wind development in Nova Scotia
- Offshore wind and marine conservation planning: Emerging considerations in Atlantic Canada
- Agency and jurisdictional roundtable highlights from GOMC members

Materials and presentations from the meeting are available [here](#).

Upcoming GOMC Meeting: May 28-29, 2025

The Gulf of Maine Council will host a virtual meeting on May 28 and 29, 2025, from 9 – 12 ET each day. The first day of the meeting will focus on the following **coastal resilience** topics:

- Massachusetts ResilientCoasts Initiative
- CLIMAtlantic's Coastal Adaptation Toolkit
- Maine Coastwise Approach
- USGS Modeling Tool for Stream Crossing Replacement

The second day of the meeting will focus on **promoting resilient working waterfronts** in the Gulf of Maine, with the following presentations:

- Highlights from the National Working Waterfront Network
- Storm Response + Preparedness in Maine's Working Waterfront Communities
- Day 2 will also include roundtable highlights from GOMC members

Briefing materials for the meeting will be made available [here](#).

Gulf of Maine Marine Debris Action Plan

The Gulf of Maine Council has been working in collaboration with the NOAA Marine Debris program and partners from throughout the region to develop the next 5-year Gulf of Maine Marine Debris Action Plan. The plan will highlight strategies to achieve goals associated with prevention, research, removal and disposal, policy, and regional coordination. The next workshop to continue developing the plan will take place on May 21, 2025.