Ocean Planning & Offshore Renewable Energy

Maryland's Chesapeake & Coastal Service

Our ocean faces an era of unprecedented activity. Energy development, commercial fishing, recreational uses, and shipping are all competing for use and space.

As the State explores the development of new offshore wind energy facilities, proactive ocean planning and mapping provides the opportunity to understand and balance these competing uses. Coastal and marine spatial planning is underway in Maryland to help identify areas most suitable for various types of activities in order to reduce potential conflict among uses, facilitate compatible uses, and reduce environmental impacts to preserve crucial ecosystem services.

Maryland's Coastal Atlas

Maryland's Coastal Atlas *(http://dnr. maryland.gov/ccp/coastalatlas)* is a tool that has been developed to support ocean planning efforts and provides data and maps illustrating administrative, human use, biological and geophysical resource data.

DNR staff engages with stakeholders at the April open house held in Berlin just outside Assateague National Seashore.

"The ocean waters off the coast of Maryland provide a wealth of economic and environmental services to local communities... We are reaching out to our citizens to ensure that the State has the best information available to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas."

- John Griffin, Secretary
MD Department of Natural Resources

Planning efforts to date have employed data and information collected from multiple partners and a broad range of stakeholders, including public-use data gathered through public meetings.

Stakeholder Outreach

In order to raise public awareness about offshore wind energy development and to expand the list of data, Maryland began working with stakeholders in April 2010.

Two open houses were conducted for the public by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) in Annapolis and in Ocean City/Berlin. Information on offshore wind energy, project timelines, the anticipated leasing process, and the opportunity for community response were presented. More than 75 stakeholders attended and engaged in a discussion about the

Martin O'Malley, Governor
John R. Griffin, Secretary

future of our ocean and the State's ocean mapping and planning efforts.

To provide those stakeholders who were not able to attend the open houses an opportunity to access the information and to participate in the discussion, DNR created a Virtual Open House website *(http://dnr.maryland.gov/ccp/coastal_resources/oceanplanning)*.

The site provides access to all of the information displayed at the open houses and access to an online public comment database.

Scoping meetings and one-on-one interviews were conducted with targeted stakeholders, such as commercial and recreational and fishermen and resource managers, to collect local, community knowledge and to gather information on historical, current and future uses. Maps were distributed to stakeholders so that they could delineate areas of interest or concern in the ocean; and user-group meetings were held to review existing ocean maps and to edit and identify areas within a group setting.

By providing these opportunities, potential conflicts can be identified and avoided early in the planning process.

Maryland Offshore Renewable Energy Task Force

Maryland DNR is one of a number of state and federal agencies that is represented on a Maryland Offshore Renewable Energy Task Force convened by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

The Task Force serves as a forum through which BOEM can share current information about its offshore leasing activities and elected officers of State, local, and tribal governments and other Federal officials may provide meaningful and timely input in the implementation of the BOEM renewable energy regulatory framework. By having all parties at the same table, the Task Force aims to facilitate information sharing as early as possible and to give interested and affected parties the opportunity to actively provide input into the leasing process rather than simply react to BOEM actions.

DNR is using the information gathered through the outreach activities to ensure that the leasing process addresses the issues raised by the stakeholders and resource experts. Issues raised include the potential impacts of offshore wind energy development on offshore birds, corals, artificial reefs, fishery resources and tournaments, marine mammals, bats, sand resources and shoals, and viewsheds. Maryland has used this input to provide guidance during the identification of a draft planning area that may be considered for offshore wind energy development.

Maryland's ocean planning efforts to date have resulted in: the collection of site-specific ocean use and natural resource data; identification of knowledge gaps and research needs; a better understanding of the breadth of ocean uses and potential areas of conflict; and early discussions with stakeholder groups to establish a transparent ocean planning process.