

## PRESSRELEASE

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**CONTACT:**  
Arlo Hemphill, MARCO  
[ahemphill@midatlanticocean.org](mailto:ahemphill@midatlanticocean.org)  
(202) 746-3484

### **Mid-Atlantic States Present Ocean Data Products Data to Inform Regional Ocean Planning Process Shared with Public**

**DEWEY BEACH, DELAWARE** — The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), a five state partnership of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and Virginia, today released an ambitious and wide-ranging set of information on the vast natural resources and economically-important uses of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean, which contribute to the health and vibrancy of the region's coastal communities. The analytical data included in this release are a significant step forward in improving the scientific basis for regional ocean decision-making.

Over 100 individuals representing the local fishing sector, municipalities, universities, industry and environmental groups, and the public attended a forum to learn about the data and how it will be immediately used.

"Let's focus on this information first, let's get it right, let's take our time with that." stated Secretary David Small of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, who addressed the forum, "If we can coalesce around a fundamentally strong body of information, we can use that data to make strong management decisions together as a region."

Leading ocean scientists and data managers received funding from MARCO to develop these analytical data products in support of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (MidA RPB). The body is charged with developing a regional Ocean Action Plan, due later this year. The forum provided an opportunity for the public — including key ocean use stakeholders — to familiarize themselves with the underlying data, analyses and caveats involved with the data products.

"There was a treasure trove of scientific data out there that agencies and universities had been collecting for decades. It's just never been pulled into a single place before. Synthesizing much of this information for MARCO's Ocean Data Portal will help us see where Mid-Atlantic ocean resources are located, human uses are occurring and where we may need to focus our management attention to ensure a healthy and secure ocean ecosystem and economy," said Laura McKay, Program Manager for the Commonwealth of Virginia's Coastal Zone Management Program and MARCO Management Board Chair.

The products presented at the forum include: a synthesis of data related to marine animal distribution; a human use data synthesis depicting the locations of various human activities in the ocean; and a regional ocean assessment that characterizes the uses, resources and features of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean.

Presentations from the event will shortly be available on MARCO's website ([www.midatlanticocean.org](http://www.midatlanticocean.org)), with much of the data eventually appearing in a mapped format on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal (<http://portal.midatlanticocean.org>).

"This is the best ocean science available for the Mid-Atlantic", said Sarah W. Cooksey, Environmental Program Administrator for the State of Delaware's Coastal Programs, who also

sits on MARCO's Management Board. "It just needed to be brought together in one place, and MARCO wanted the public - including key ocean users - to have a chance to talk with the data team before considering for inclusion in our Ocean Action Plan. That's what happened here today."

A draft of the Mid-Atlantic's Ocean Action Plan is expected to be released by the Mid-A RPB for public review later in 2016.

## **Background**

In 2010, a Presidential Executive Order established a National Ocean Policy (NOP) to guide the protection, maintenance, and restoration of America's oceans and coasts. The NOP called for the creation of Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) to coordinate and implement regional ocean planning. The MidA RPB, made up of state, federal, tribal and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council representatives, was formally established in April 2013 to leverage existing efforts underway by states and regional entities, and engage stakeholders and technical experts at every key step.

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## **About MARCO**

Established by the Governors of the five coastal Mid-Atlantic states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia) in 2009, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) is a partnership to address shared regional priorities and provide a collective voice for the region. The five MARCO states focus on four-shared priority areas identified in the Governors Agreement: climate change adaptation, marine habitats, offshore renewable energy and water quality. MARCO also uses regional ocean planning as a means to advance these priorities.

Learn more at: [www.midatlanticocean.org](http://www.midatlanticocean.org)