FTS-DOC CONFERENCING

Moderator: Andrew Winer
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1:00 pm CT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer period. If you would like to ask a question at that time, please press star then 1 on your touchtone telephone. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

Now I'd like to turn the call over to your host, Mr. Andy Winer, Director of External Affairs for NOAA. Sir, you may begin.

Andrew Winer: Thank you and welcome everybody. We're here this afternoon and this morning for some of you to participate in a discussion about the Ocean Policy Task Force and its findings. The people that are gathered her in Silver Spring and also online who'll be speaking today include myself, Andy Winer. I'm the Director of External Affairs at NOAA.

Joining me this afternoon is Jen Lukens from the NOAA Office of Policy; Sam Rauch who's the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs; Emily Menashes, the Deputy Director and the Acting Director for the Office of Sustainable Fisheries.

And then we're being staffed in a robust manner by the National Ocean Council staff which includes Andy Lipsky and Sharon Hayes; Teresa Christopher from the NOAA Office of Policy; Heather Sagar from NOAA Fisheries; (Daniel Reo) from the Office of the Under Secretary; and James Chang from External Affairs.

And the reason that we are conducting this call is that many of you - many of the groups that you represent participated in roundtable discussions from last year and provided input on the Ocean Policy Task Force interim reports.

And now that the final report is out and President Obama has adopted it through his National Ocean Policy, we wanted to take the opportunity to report back and to share an overview of the policy with some specific insights on the impact that it will have on commercial fisheries.

So we'll be starting out the format today will be a presentation from Jennifer Lukens, presentation then from Sam Rauch and then a question and answer session that will be opened up for all of you. So want to thank all of you again and I'll be turning the floor and the mike over to Jennifer Lukens.

Jennifer Lukens: Thank you Andy. Hello everyone. Good afternoon, good morning. Thank you for calling in today. We're really pleased to talk to you a little bit about the national ocean policy.

On July 19 President Obama acted upon the final recommendations of the Ocean Policy Task Force and signed an Executive Order that adopted a new policy entitled For the Stewardship of our Oceans, Our Coasts and the Great Lakes.

And this is really an historic moment for our oceans because for the first time in our nation's history we have a comprehensive national ocean policy, something that was called for by both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.

So this policy is really to summarize it I think it is - if you had to put it into three words, it means that healthy oceans matter. Oceans, coasts and great lakes really do play a crucial role in the life of every American and this policy recognizes that.

Coastal counties are currently home to over half of America's total population and together they generate approximately 57% of our gross domestic product. Coastal regions also provide enormous environmental benefits. Shallow coastal wetlands provide a buffer against coastal storms. Wetlands and coastal reefs serve as nursery grounds for many species of marine animals. And estuarine marshes and bays filter nutrients flowing from uplands to the sea.

Our oceans, coasts and great lakes also hold really important recreational and cultural value as witnessed by the 90 million people who come to them each year for vacation and recreation. So is the ocean feast or famine? In the future these areas are in jeopardy as we really do have dozens of different ocean and coastal interests are raising to stake the claim in the ocean and compete for ocean space and resources.

These land and ocean activities are currently regulated on a sector-by-sector basis. In current - the current policies have lacked really a loc of integration or understanding or consideration of how the different activities from the different sectors could impact one another or their collective impact on the ecosystem as a whole.

So really we need to both recognize the services that healthy ecosystems provide and identify individual and collective impacts of our human uses and multiple human activities of what they are from those human activities.

By understanding both sides of the equation, what we get from our oceans and coasts and how our activities impact those ecosystem services that they provide, we can make better decisions on how and where we live, work and play on our coasts. In short, being smart stewards really means retaining multiple benefits.

The National Ocean Policy is really about changing about how we do business. At present we regulate our human activities in our ocean, coasts and great lakes at the federal level with over 140 statutes, regulations and policies. And really the piecemeal approach and sector by sector and issue by issue approach that we've had as really - while focusing on specific issues has really missed the opportunity to look at everything comprehensively as one big picture in the interrelations.

And this is the understanding that different parts of the ecosystem are connected to one another and so too should the policies be integrated. The new ocean policy and ecosystem based coastal and marine spatial planning that's contained within that policy call for the coordination among those existing management regime across the Federal Government and in the Federal Government and regions.

In addition, the policies require government agencies to work together to engage the stakeholders in the new open and participatory framework so that all stakeholders can have a seat at the table to participate in planning.

The ocean policy itself has some shared values that I'd like to outline here. He announced a historic policy that really is based on the recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force.

The recommendations were formed as a result of six public - and public input from six regional meetings we held across the country and a series of 38 expert roundtables that were held for stakeholders. And really the task force received 5000 written comments - over 5000 written comments submitted by mail and electronically.

Using this key input, the policy identified the shared values among all of the different stakeholders that are depicted on this slide. The, excuse me, the shared values here are listed which is really about balancing ocean health and economic and community prosperity. That's key to the policy.

Being able to level the playing field for all stakeholders. All stakeholders have an interest in - and a voice and a say in what's going to be happening in their area. And it really does focus on respecting the unique character of each region of the U.S. with focusing on bottoms up regional planning and making decision that are based upon the best available science.

So the building blocks of the national policy itself, there's four key ones listed here. And to bring the policy itself into a reality, the policy creates these four things here. The first one is a National Ocean Council that will be formed of the 24 different federal agencies and offices and charges them of coordination, setting goals for implementing the policy itself and measuring outcomes to ensure that the ocean policy that servers America's communities.

There are nine national priority objectives as a way of implementing that policy that embrace coordination and integration among all levels of

government to address pressing issues such as climate change and ocean (unintelligible) edification.

The third is coastal and marine spatial planning. Using that as a public policy process to help us better determine how the oceans, coasts and great lakes are sustainably used and protected now and for future generations. And the last is the regional planning bodies that will execute coastal and marine spatial planning to ensure that the unique needs of each region of the United States are met in a way that respects regional objectives and priorities.

As I mentioned in the previous slide, the policy stands up a National Ocean Council. They were the ones to be charge with implementing this policy. And what you see here is the Web site. On this Web site that you can go to it has - it currently links to the final recommendations of the Ocean Policy Task Force and the Executive Order that was signed by the President.

It really - I envision that - the National Ocean Council envisions this Web site as being the center point of the information in the future - we move forward with implementation.

So the National Ocean Policy is the nine priority objectives that I referenced there. They're really broken up into two different categories. In this first column on the left hand side is how we do business. And that really represents the overarching ways in which the U.S. - United States Government is going to operate differently to better improve stewardship.

And those include ecosystem based management approach, coastal and marine spatial planning which we'll talk about a little bit more later in the presentation, informing decisions and improve understanding and coordinating support which includes horizontally and also vertically.

The second category on the right hand side of the slide is the five areas of special emphasis. They really represent a substantive area of particular importance to achieving the national policy. Out of the all the things that need to be addressed in the oceans to implement this policy, these are the five subject matter issues that the task force thought were most important to tackle.

The policy outlines that the National Ocean Council over the next 6 to 12 months will have to develop strategic action plans for each one of these priority objectives.

So that's an - it's just a overview of the national policy itself and really to get more over to the specifics here, I'm going to turn it over to Sam Rauch from the National Fisheries Service.

Sam Rauch: Thank you Jennifer. At the heart of the new ocean policy lies coastal marine and spatial planning. So one of the nine priority objectives it was one of the special emphasis of the President in the original tasking. It's made up of several important components.

First, we envision a fair and open process where all stakeholders can participate in managing our oceans, coasts and great lakes. There needs to be a focus on the unique regional needs and priorities that have the highest values for each community.

As Jennifer said and as we'll talk about later, building this process from the bottom up is very important. The management of ecosystems as a whole needs to be a focus rather than species by species or issue by issue or sector by sector, which is one of the problems that we're trying to address here.

And as always, objective science to ensure as a way to ensure stakeholders start from a comment understanding of current conditions and a basis for joint decision making is important. Weaving these elements together, we grow towards shared responsibility for coastal resources we all depend on. And this approach will provide a fair and rational way to make difficult decisions that will impact us all.

Very important to understand it is not intended to create an additional delay or layer of regulation or bureaucracy but rather is a way to make the existing authorities work better to plan it in advance so that we can streamline some of the efforts and we can jointly make these decisions that we - that are important to all of us because no two of the regions are alike, there's no one size fits all top down approach to CMSP.

Rather each region and its stakeholders will have the opportunity and responsibility to tailor the process ensuring that all interests and all users are represented. The bottom up approach will ensure that CMSP serves and responds directly to community needs.

There are nine regional planning bodies that established under the National Ocean Policy and they're designed to mirror the geography of the ocean, coasts and great lakes ecosystems and existing regional government structures such as the West Coast Governor's Agreement so that the communities within each region can work together towards developing solutions that make sense for the issues that they share in common with one another.

NOAA will sit on each of these nine planning bodies as outline din the framework. Other members will include federal agencies, state agencies, tribes each with authorities relevant to the issues at hand. They need to be able to make decisions and commitments to the process on behalf o the agency.

During the public comment period we heard from regional fishing management councils their desire to be a part of the regional planning bodies. And (unintelligible) that mean the task force did not grant membership initially but did require a formal mechanism for consultation with regional management councils understanding this unique role. It also left open an option to reevaluate the position of the councils as we go forward.

In terms of implementing the CMSP the framework proposes a three-pronged approach for reconnecting coastal communities with ocean, coastal and great lakes environment. It turns the spotlight away from Washington, D.C. to restore the focus to regions, communities and ecosystems in (unison) to make the most sense to people in the environment.

It establishes a decision making process that provides a mechanism for coastal and ocean stakeholders to engage with one another and to plan for the future. And it mandates decision making be based on the best available science to ensure that stakeholders begin working from a shared frame of reference and knowledge.

The goal is to provide a more efficient and transparent way to softly plan for multiple uses of the marine environment in a sustainable manner rather than reacting to crisis or conflicts as they arise. (Unintelligible) special planning includes traditional uses such as commercial recreational fishing, coastal aquaculture, transportation, conservation and culture.

Planning also provides the framework to consider emerging uses such as renewable energy, closed re-circulated aquaculture and offshore culture. The provides will develop - will provide a level playing field for all interests when determining how best to use our ocean, coasts and great lakes. It doesn't

promote competition among recreational commercial stewardship, science, navigation and other cultural agencies. Instead it works to transform the current dynamics among users to one of cooperation and collaboration.

It is important to note that the process is not intended to delay or halt existing plans for the ocean, coast or great lakes. Rather it envisions a reasonably based collaborative planning process in which key agencies and stakeholders have meaningful voices and corresponding responsibilities in identifying the goals and objectives for the regional waters and in designing the desired mosaic of uses that reflect those goals.

The resulting regional coastal and marine special plans will for the first time explicitly take into account the full range of uses, outcomes and management strategies to achieve those objectives. The National Ocean Council will provide guidance and oversight to the regional initiatives but this is a bottom up initiative that will be led by the regions.

As we said before, science is at the heart of this new national policy and at the heart of the CMSP framework. Our plan is constantly changing, hence the need for ongoing monitoring and ongoing research to understand why these changes are under way and to inform decisions.

Establishing science as the basis for decision-making enables thoughtful decisions and informed solutions for preserving existing uses while carefully considering new activities.

In order to have credibility with stakeholders, our scientists will be challenged to grow their skills as communicators to be responsive to their needs and to build relationships of trust so that the communities will have confidence in their data and knowledge.

As I said at the beginning, throughout the process we heard from the regional fishery management councils. We understand the important role that they have in managing our coastal and marine resources. The experienced voice of the councils will bring immediate depth to the process, which is why the framework recognizes that their involvement is critical.

In addition to the expertise in science, the councils have the statutory authority to develop management protection measures for the fisheries habitat and corals. The authorities will also have defined the roles that the councils play in coastal marine special planning.

As I indicated, the framework does not require that the regional planning bodies - that the councils that are on the regional planning bodies to begin with but does require that there be a formal consultation mechanism established and does direct that there be a further assessment of the process to determine whether the councils should be a part of the regional planning bodies themselves.

Finally, the scientific data and information gathered by the councils and considered at virtually every council meeting as important part of the national and regional information systems designed to support the CMSP decision making.

I'd like to turn to the role of the fishing communities themselves. So I talked about how the councils will be a part but not requiring the fishermen to go through the councils but have a independent role is important to us. So there's two separate ways in which individual fishing stakeholders can engage.

One, as I indicated, was through the council process. We often view the councils as an important vetting process for fishery stakeholders to come where they can bring their decisions and then form the policies. But there will be a mechanism for direct access from the fishing interest stakeholders to the regional planning bodies as with other stakeholders.

It is important that the fishing community take advantage of those mechanisms to be a part of this process. Only by being a part and being engaged will you help craft what the final plans look like.

So with that, let me turn it back over to Jen to see - for final thoughts on this before we take questions.

Jennifer Lukens: Thanks Sam. So I really just wanted to close out while the oceans promises balance, we really have learned that its resources are not. And the new National Ocean Policy does embrace a new ethic - ocean ethic and one that recognizes the essential link between oceans' health and our own prosperity, well being and security.

Although the policy spells out how our stewardship role must evolve to ensure a vibrant ocean tomorrow, it really rests on a foundation of education and outreach that is needed to grow ocean literacy.

A strong knowledge base will empower the members of coastal communities to become active stewards of our oceans and coasts both the modify their own footprints on ocean ecosystems and to supporting increasingly sophisticated management plans for the coastal and marine spatial planning process.

So with that, I just wanted to close out the presentation and turn it back over to Andy.

Andrew Winer: And thank you Sam and thank you Jen. And before we go to questions and answers, we have two staff members on from the National Ocean Council; Andy Lipsky and Sharon Hayes and at this time we would invite them if they have comments. Before we go into the question and answer session, we'd invite you to go ahead and make some.

Andy Lipsky: Thank you Andy. And I don't know - can you guys hear me. I'm not sure if I'm in the right phone call.

Andrew Winer: Yes you are.

Andy Lipsky: Awesome.

Andrew Winer: We got you. We can hear you.

Andy Lipsky: Nothing further to add. You've done a great job. Thank you so much for making this forum available for these important stakeholders. And if there are any questions and answers that require Sharon and I as assistants, we are available to help. Thank you very much.

Andrew Winer: Thank you Andy. And at this time if the operator could remind people what it is they need to do in order to ask questions, we'll queue you all up and then hopefully be able to answer everybody's questions.

Coordinator: Thank you sir. If you would like to ask a question, please press star then 1 on you touchtone telephone. To withdraw your request, you may press star 2. Once again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star then 1 now.

Our first question is from (James Fletcher). Your line is open.

(James Fletcher): I would like to ask when is NOAA and National Marine Fisheries going to realize that we are still using the rivers, the bays and the oceans as sewers. And there were two acts. One of them Congress passed in 1972 the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuary Act and then the Ocean Pollution Research Development and Monitoring Act of 1978 known as the Ocean Pollution Planning Act.

When are we going to realize that the chemicals that man is putting into the rivers has more to do with affecting the fish, the environment, all of the organisms that live in the ocean? We cannot continue to say that we're going to manage the fisheries and the fishermen for the good of the nation when the nation is using our waterways as sewers. We can start putting sewer treated water into the ocean.

Now my question to you is the National Ocean Policy Act going to address the chemicals that are going into the water? Thank you.

Sam Rauch: So this is Sam Rauch from the Fisheries Service. That's an excellent question and indeed one of the nine priorities objectives of the Ocean Policy is to deal with water quality and sustainable practices on land recognizing exactly what you said.

There is an important linkage between what happens on land including what ends up in our rivers that flow to the estuaries, which flow to the ocean and the productivity and health of the oceans.

But there is a profound link there. The policy talks about that link and understands that this is important. And working on that is one of the areas of special emphasis that is the focus of this policy is to try to address that

linkage, try to understand and ameliorate those impacts as they impact the ocean.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Are there any other questions out there? Right now we have nobody in the queue and we're certainly happy to free you up on a Friday morning or a Friday afternoon to get ready for the weekend. But we want to make sure that we've had a chance to answer all of your questions. And Kay Williams from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council - Kay, you're up now.

Kay Williams: Yes. Thank you. I just would like for you to go further into detail as far as your outreach with the constituencies, those commercial recreational and your NGOs. What type of forums would you be holding to get the input?

Jennifer Lukens: Well, this is Jennifer Lukens from the NOAA Policy Office. Right now what's outlined and designed in the framework is that constituent and stakeholder participation and engagement is a key part of coast and marine spatial planning. It's embedded in every step and phase of that process.

It's mandated as the regional planning bodies go about coastal and marine spatial planning. So that will in fact happen. It is in small part going to be left up to those regional planning bodies to determine the best way to go about that type of engagement and outreach to hear what stakeholders have to say because they're a critical part of the process.

So I envision that the National Ocean Council will set forth some guidance and some direction to the regional planning bodies about how that should be done. But ultimately the details of that will be worked out with the stakeholders and the members of the regional planning bodies.

Kay Williams: Great. Thank you.

Andrew Winer: Okay. We - at this point there are no other questioners in the queue. I'm going to stall for a moment just to make sure that we've given everybody a chance. And (James Fletcher) has another question. (James).

(James Fletcher): The question is in 1972 NOAA put forth a policy of protecting the resource; that it was going to be resource oriented. In 1976 Congress put forth that the resource was to be utilized for the good of the nation.

We thereby have an agency that has a policy and a Congressional act that carries the weight of law. And right now there is a conflict between the two of them and the commercial fishing industry is being caught in this conflict.

Now is the Ocean Policy going to be resource oriented or is the Ocean Policy going to be user oriented to utilize the resource for the good of the nation? Which one are we going to have?

Sam Rauch: So the policy recognizes that the ocean currently is a multi use environment. There are many existing users and it is important that all those users provide important - they're important to the nation both in terms of economics, the social structure, everything else. Part of marine spatial planning is to design those existing ocean uses and the future ocean uses in a way that provides the greatest benefit to the nation.

The policy also recognizes however that the ocean provides important ecosystem and environmental services that underlies all of those activities. And that you cannot sustain the use of all of those uses without preserving the underlying ecosystem that it lies on. So it seems to strike a balance of all of those things.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Our next questioner is (Jim Gilmore).

(Jim Gilmore): Hi. Thank you. My question relates to the ecosystem-based management. And I sit on the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission in addition to the Mid-Atlantic Council. And I'm the State Fisheries Director for New York. And the question goes to the - the concept of EBM I think is a way we need to go.

However, where we are right now in terms of management, we're struggling right now to get beyond single species management for a lot of our fisheries and we're - our next step would be multi species management. So we're going maybe up a (trofic) level where we're looking at several species together.

Ecosystem based management is in bringing in, you know, all the (trofic) levels in the oceans. And the problem is we're at single species management is just because the limited amount of data that we have. If we're going to fully go system-based management, we're talking about orders of magnitude increasing data that we don't have right now.

So I was just trying to get a sense of when this would be moving more from a concept into an actual practice if anyone's got a sense of the timeframe of that. Thank you.

Sam Rauch: Well, so I will note that a number of our existing fishery management councils currently have the ecosystem plans - fishery ecosystem plans as opposed to fishery management plans or single species. Some of them are multi species; some of them are true ecosystem plans.

The level of data required for that as you indicate can be intense to do that. It is - but it is a possible thing to do. And, as you say, we are gradually bringing all of our fisheries and I think that the coastal commissions in the states are,

you know, are going along the same way. This is something we're transitioning in from the fishery service already. They are - there is a requirement in the policy to provide more detailed strategic action plans on these priority objectives including ecosystem base management within 6 to 12 months.

And so as that gets fleshed out, that will provide a level of detail as how - as to how - when we're going to do that. But from the fisheries perspective, we are already a lot further along. And as you indicate, the limiting factor is not necessarily the structure or how you would frame such a thing. It's the data that we put into it.

And we are working on improving the data across the country. It's something that NOAA has been a strong supporter of is better ocean data around the country and that feeds directly into the ecosystem based management.

Andrew Winer: Thank you. At this time once again there's nobody in the queue to ask a question. I'm going to give this another few seconds to see if somebody pops up on the board and I'm not seeing anybody.

So at this point we would thank you all for participating and remind you that what we intend to do is to post this session next week together with the presentation that we made. So if anybody that you know missed it, they'll be able to pick it up. I want to thank you for listening in today and make sure that you stay in touch with us if you have any questions as this process begins to unfold and have a good weekend. Thank you all.

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