

About Marine Spatial Planning

October 15, 2009

Dr. Jane Lubchenco:

Hello, this is NOAA Administrator, Dr. Jane Lubchenco from the edge of the famed San Francisco Bay.

I'm in San Francisco for the second in a series of public meetings being held by President Obama's Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. We're here seeking input to develop a national policy on how we can use the ocean and its resources wisely to ensure healthy and resilient ocean ecosystems and coastal communities.

You may not have noticed, but our oceans are becoming VERY crowded places.

Here in San Francisco Bay, for example, windsurfers and amateur sailors share busy waters with ferries, tour boats, warships, resident sea lions and myriad tiny plants and animals hidden beneath the waves.

Further out in the Pacific, and around the world, human uses of our oceans are increasing: commercial fishing boats, cargo ships and pleasure craft compete with offshore gas and oil exploration, new wind and wave energy development, the laying of underwater cables, and of course, the rich marine life that makes oceans so important.

Marine spatial planning is a tool to minimize human-use conflicts in the ocean and protect the diverse and abundant resources that support these uses.

Dr. Charlie Wahle, senior scientist for NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas Center here in the Bay Area is an expert on marine spatial planning.

Dr. Charlie Wahle:

Marine spatial planning takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to managing our oceans.

It brings together all the oceans' users – from recreational fishermen and boaters, to industry and the military, to environmental groups and state, local and tribal governments – to create a common blueprint for a smart management plan that protects the ocean and the people who want and need to use it.

We begin in a specific ocean place and ask: What do we, as a society, want *from* the ocean and *for* the ocean, both now, and in the future, and how do we allocate human uses to achieve those common goals?

Dr. Jane Lubchenco:

Marine spatial planning has created a lot of buzz lately, but it's not a new concept for NOAA.

Here with me today is Bill Douros, NOAA's West Coast Regional Director for our National Marine Sanctuaries program.

Bill Douros:

Our national marine sanctuaries are great examples of how NOAA has consistently applied marine spatial planning techniques to conserve and protect our treasured ocean and marine areas.

For example, when the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1981, marine spatial planning was critical to placing limits on how close ships could travel in order to protect sea birds and other marine life from ship groundings and oil spills. More recently, marine spatial planning helped NOAA determine zones in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary for Jet Ski operation and the safe discharge of sediments from harbor dredging.

Dr. Jane Lubchenco:

We still have a lot to learn about how to best manage our nation's coasts, oceans and Great Lakes.

The Ocean Policy Task Force is working hard to develop recommendations about coastal and marine spatial planning and NOAA stands ready and willing to help, contributing our expertise and our scientific capabilities in modeling, mapping, observations and planning.

What does the future look like if marine spatial planning is done well? It will be cleaner, healthier, and more ecologically diverse. It will fulfill the needs of those who use it, in a way that's sustainable, equitable and reflective of society's values.

All it takes ... is planning.

Until next time, this is Jane Lubchenco.