

# The National Strategy for Mapping, Exploration and Characterization of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (NOMECS Strategy)

Mapping, exploring, and characterizing our waters and seafloor provide the fundamental knowledge necessary to conserve and sustain our ocean. The NOMECS Strategy and Implementation Plan outline the goals and steps that U.S. Federal agencies are taking to map, explore, and characterize our oceans and coasts. Implementation of the NOMECS Strategy is led by the interagency NOMECS Council and its Interagency Working Groups on Ocean and Coastal Mapping and Ocean Exploration and Characterization. The NOMECS Council was officially authorized in the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), within the National Ocean Exploration Act.

The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends up to 200 nautical miles from shore and covers more seafloor area than all 50 states combined, but only 50 percent of it has been minimally mapped<sup>1</sup> and only a fraction of that has been explored or characterized.

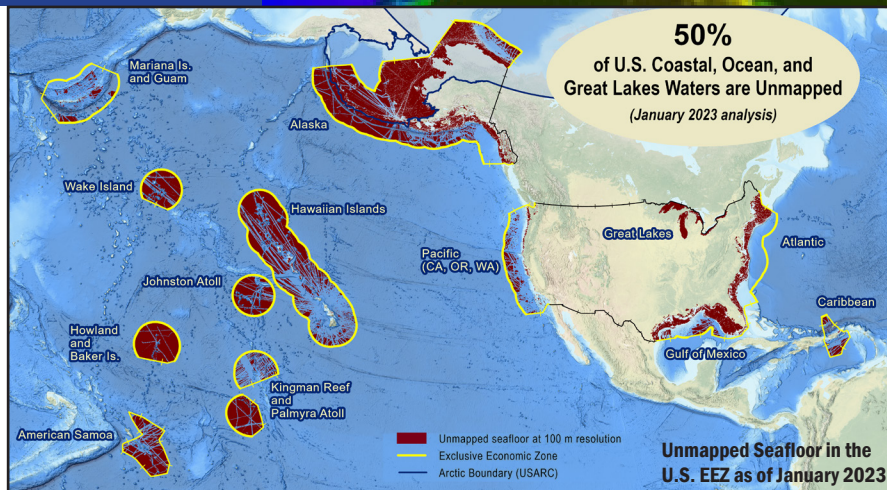
## Key Benefits of NOMECS Efforts Include:

- A resilient society
- Protection of our natural resources
- A safe and prosperous economy
- A diverse blue workforce

## How to Get Involved

Get on our mailing list, or share your existing data and collaborate with us on new acquisitions of data and technology innovations. Contact us at:

[nomec.execsec@noaa.gov](mailto:nomec.execsec@noaa.gov)



To improve our understanding of the U.S. EEZ, the NOMECS Strategy sets **five goals** for action:

### **1. Coordinate interagency efforts and resources to map, explore, and characterize the U.S. EEZ**

- Align priorities to meet the following NOMECS goals.

### **2. Map the U.S. EEZ**

- Coordinate mapping efforts to completely map U.S. waters deeper than 40 meters by 2030, and coastal waters (0-40 meters) by 2040.

### **3. Explore and characterize priority areas of the U.S. EEZ**

- Identify priority areas and coordinate interagency and cross-sectoral efforts to explore and characterize the U.S. EEZ.

### **4. Develop and mature new and emerging science and technologies to map, explore, and characterize the U.S. EEZ**

- Coordinate efforts to promote and advance new technologies.

### **5. Build public and private partnerships to map, explore, and characterize the U.S. EEZ**

- Mapping, exploring, and characterizing the U.S. EEZ requires efforts beyond Federal agencies. Agencies will support cross-sectoral partnerships to ensure mapping, exploration, and characterization are completed.

<sup>1</sup> A 'minimally mapped' area has at least 1-2 soundings per 100m cell based on [U.S. Bathymetry Gap Analysis](#)

## NOMECE Definitions

**Mapping** provides comprehensive data and information needed to understand seafloor characteristics such as depth, topography, bottom type, sediment composition and distribution, underlying geologic structure, and benthic flora and fauna.

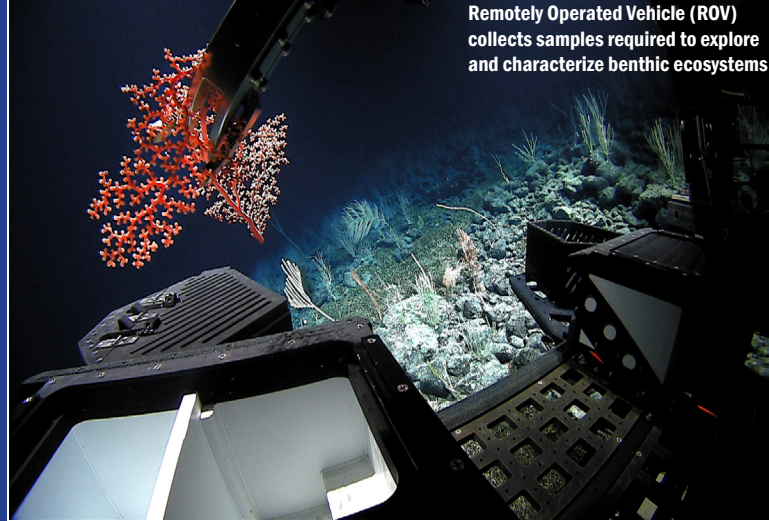
**Exploration** provides a multidisciplinary view of an unknown or poorly understood area of the seafloor, sub-bottom, or water column; and an initial assessment of an area's physical, chemical, geological, biological, archaeological, or other characteristics of such an area.

**Characterization** provides comprehensive data and interpretations for a specific area of interest of the seafloor, sub-bottom, water column, or hydrologic features in direct support of specific research, environmental protection, resource management, policymaking, or applied mission objectives.

**The NOMECE Strategy relies on key partnerships to accomplish its goals:**

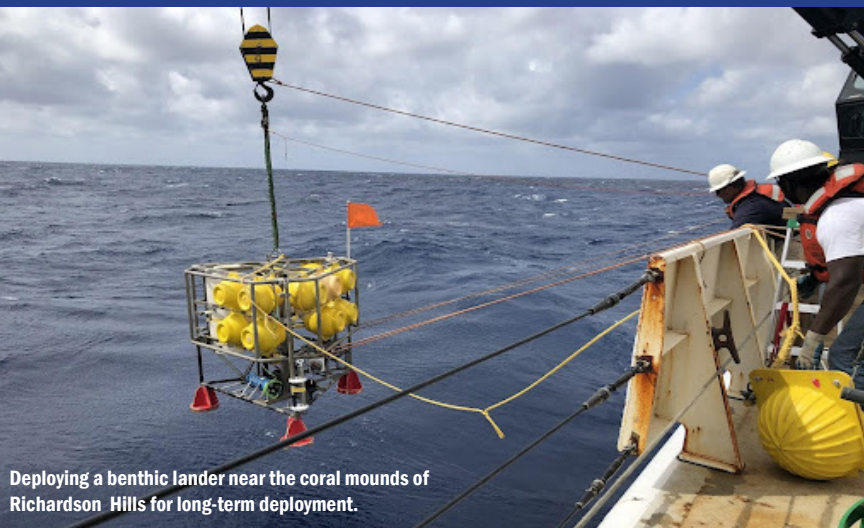
- **Cross-Sectoral Engagement:** Private sector, academic, and non-governmental organizations will help to develop and mature new and emerging science and technology, and contribute to the growth and efficiency of mapping, exploration, and characterization efforts.
- **Tribal Engagement:** The NOMECE Strategy aligns with principles of the Biden Administration's Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships to engage with Tribal Representatives and work with Tribal governments on aspects of the Implementation Plan, including education and workforce development, targeted outreach related to marine cultural heritage, data sharing, and use of knowledge and data for coastal community climate adaptation and mitigation.

Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV)  
collects samples required to explore  
and characterize benthic ecosystems



**Implementation of the NOMECE Strategy complements several ongoing national and international efforts:**

- **Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy (ACMS):** NOMECE Strategy activities will align with efforts to map the Alaskan coastal zone by 2030.
- **The Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project:** NOMECE Strategy activities and products directly contribute to this international effort to produce a definitive map of the world ocean floor by 2030.
- **America the Beautiful:** NOMECE data can help identify marine areas suitable for conservation, contributing to the Biden Administration's stated goal of conserving 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. NOMECE data can contribute to the National Nature Assessment, another part of the Biden Administration's broader agenda to conserve and restore nature for the U.S.
- **United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (UN Ocean Decade):** The NOMECE Strategy supports UN Ocean Decade goals for creating a clean and resilient global ocean, promoting diversity in STEM fields, and ocean literacy. NOMECE supports UN Ocean Decade Actions through Challenger 150, Seascape Alaska, and Lakebed 2030.
- **Ocean-Climate Action Plan:** NOMECE activities will help provide baseline information on ocean mapping, exploration, and characterization, as well as support and participate in opportunities that notify, engage, and communicate with local communities.



Deploying a benthic lander near the coral mounds of Richardson Hills for long-term deployment.