

## NOAA SAB Approves Report on Marine Spatial Planning

The NOAA Science Advisory Board has an Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group. This Working Group produced a report to the SAB entitled *Strategic Advice on Designing and Implementing Coastal and Marine Spatial Plans* (“Report”). On May 16, 2011, the SAB approved the Report with some minor editorial changes. The Report as approved will be recommended by the SAB to NOAA.

The Report is based on review and assessment of a representative set of 17 Marine Spatial planning examples from around the world (including plans and national frameworks). The Report’s goal is to offer findings and recommendations to assist NOAA and the National Ocean Council in development of Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (“CMSP”) regionally and nationally. The Report examines “seven key categories central to the development of CMSP: (i) objectives, (ii) scope, (iii) authority, (iv) participants, (v) data, (vi) decision support and (vii) measures.

The Report makes findings and recommendations for NOAA’s consideration, including the following:

• **Finding:** “The majority of plans do not have formal metrics of success.”

• **Recommendation:** “NOAA and the NOC should require plans to explicitly state what constitutes success.”

• **Finding:** “Few of the CMSP efforts have a clear plan or framework for data management and data decision support after the effort is done.... Data have been used both analytically and illustratively in the planning efforts.... In all plans there is a strong reliance on qualitative data and expert opinion, with few standards for data inclusion.”

• **Recommendation:** “NOAA and the NOC should ensure that scientific and technical expertise is available to the CMSP processes at all stages. This expertise should include the development of science advisory boards at the,

- National level - who should evaluate and disseminate technical guidance on elements such as types of data to include and their resolution and how to manage data portals and the connections between them;

- Regional level - to interpret and apply the guidance identified by the national group of experts, refer needs to the national group as they emerge, and address regional scientific and technical issues as appropriate (e.g. decisions on specific data sets).”

The Report also discusses stakeholder participation in CMSP. The Report’s authors noted at the May 16<sup>th</sup> SAB conference that early stakeholder participation can facilitate planning. However, stakeholders have been disappointed when plans do not always reflect their goals. In response to this stakeholder involvement issue, the Report recommends that

“NOAA and NOC should provide basic guidance to regions on stakeholder roles,

responsibilities, and engagement strategies. These should be defined early in the process to avoid confusion.”

Other points made at the May 16<sup>th</sup> SAB conference include the following.

***Definition of Success***

The Report authors noted that most plans are so young that it isn't possible yet to judge success. The authors also stated that metrics must be defined to judge the performance of plan before the plan is developed. Evaluation of a plan's success should take place on a continuous basis and be used to guide plan implementation.

***What is the product of the MSP?***

The Report authors stated that there can be two different outcomes: (1) A map designating allowed and not allowed activities and (2) a process for developing an MSP.

***Criteria for including data in an MSP***

The authors state that MSP participants are bombarded with data and they must specify the criteria for inclusion and exclusion

***MSP's must address both ecological and economic concerns***

The authors state that the utility of an MSP will be severely limited if it addresses only ecological concerns.

In addition to approving the Report as edited, the SAB also agreed to ask NOAA to respond to the Report in less than the usual 12 month period after receipt of an SAB report. An expedited response is being requested because the SAB felt the Report to be important in an area (marine spatial planning) that has a great deal of current activity.

In this regard, SAB members noted that there is a National Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Workshop scheduled for June 21-23, 2011, organized by the National Ocean Council. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans/cmstp-workshop> for more information on this Workshop.

Other SAB members discussed a possible meeting of approximately 40 people interested in marine spatial planning for Southern California. No date was mentioned, but the meeting would be organized by scientists at USC and UC Davis.

The next NOAA SAB meeting is scheduled for July 20-21, at Ann Arbor, Michigan.

- Click here to read the Report

[http://www.sab.noaa.gov/Meetings/2011/may/ESMWG\\_CMSP\\_Report\\_Text\\_2May11.pdf](http://www.sab.noaa.gov/Meetings/2011/may/ESMWG_CMSP_Report_Text_2May11.pdf)