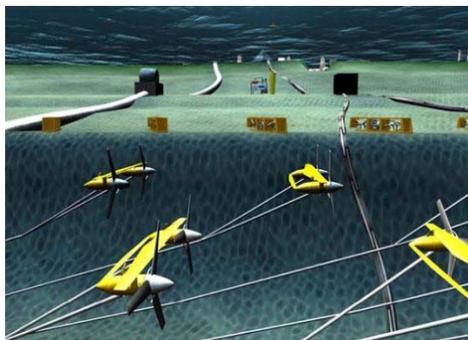


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The nation’s oceans are being overwhelmed with increasing demands and competing activities, ranging from renewable energy to aquaculture, new activities that are vying for ocean spaces with more traditional uses of the oceans for fishing, recreational boating and shipping. These varied uses are “often incompatible not only with one another, but also with the need to protect what remains of fragile marine ecosystems.”¹ As a result, governments are redesigning regulatory strategies to accommodate and coordinate multiples uses of oceans, relying on marine spatial planning.

As a response to these competing uses of the oceans, the message of this report and a longstanding position of the Florida Ocean Alliance (FOA) is that marine spatial planning is urgently needed in Florida. Ocean management is critical for the long term health of the state’s oceans, as a means for reconciling multiple uses while protecting ocean resources. Recent developments signal the beginning of state leadership and ownership for a marine spatial planning process for Florida. This is an essential prerequisite to preparing Florida for future policy discussions and potential changes in state policy on submerged lands and for proposed changes to federal submerged lands in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and mid and south Atlantic.



The Florida Ocean Alliance is issuing this report on marine spatial planning as a response to escalating activity surrounding uses of Florida’s ocean and coastal assets. FOA is uniquely positioned to bring forth this issue in the state. It is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing Florida’s coastal and ocean resources for continued social and economic benefits. Its members represent ocean-related

industries in tourism, ports, shipping, fishing, boating and cruising, as well as those from nonprofit research organizations, academia and public interest groups. The Florida Ocean Alliance is committed to positioning Florida as an international leader in integrating ocean conservation, education and responsible economic development.



For over two years, FOA has championed ocean management for Florida. Two Oceans Day Workshops have been devoted to this topic, one in 2009 and the other in 2010. This latest report is a sequel to FOA’s earlier ocean management report published in summer 2009: “Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida.”² That report provided the background for understanding the case for ocean management in Florida waters as a national and global priority. The recent report is designed to take this case to the next level, based on the 2010 Oceans Day Workshop. The focus is on balancing the economic value of Florida’s ocean and coastal resources with the use and conservation of its natural resources and with the current and future energy needs of the state.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Since the last report on ocean management was issued by the Florida Ocean Alliance in June, 2009, there were several important developments at the state and federal level that have brought ocean management to the forefront of policymaking. At the state level, the Florida Legislature has deliberated and held statewide meetings on oil/gas explorations off the state’s Gulf coast and a report was issued in March, 2010.³ A second report was issued by the Florida Select Policy Council on

² *Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida*. (2009). Florida Ocean Alliance. Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Available at <http://www.floridaoceanalliance.org>.

³ *Potential Impacts of Oil & Gas Exploration in the Gulf*. (February 2010). Century Commission for a Sustainable Florida. The Collins Center, <http://www.collinscenter.org/resource/resmgr/OilDrilling/oilHome.html>.

¹ “A plan for the ocean.” *Nature* 465 (May 6, 2010) 9.

Strategic and Economic Planning, Florida House of Representatives, in April 2010⁴ to assess the main risks to the state of oil and gas development in Florida’s coastal waters. Noteworthy is the number one recommendation from this risk reduction study:

“Integrated maritime planning and management is critical to reducing risks from prospective oil and gas activities.”⁵

An oil drilling bill discussed in the 2010 legislative session has been deferred to the 2011 legislative session.⁶ The 2010 Florida Legislature appropriated \$250,000 to develop a web mapping tool to track natural resources and activity in the ocean as a means to aid the state in marine spatial planning. The funding is targeted for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This appropriation will allow the two state agencies to begin the collection of data that is an essential foundation for marine spatial planning.



Marine spatial planning is important to address Florida’s resource assets, stakeholder needs, potential stakeholder conflicts, risk assessments and emergency response actions for the state and its citizens. Coupled with Florida’s legislative activity that is moving parallel to the federal initiative to consider expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration in the mid and south Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, a sea change is underway in state and national policy that may significantly impact Florida’s oceans and coasts. The policy shift has signaled an economic transition for the nation, from an economy based on fossil fuels and foreign oil to one based on domestic fuels and clean energy.⁷ The state needs a Marine Spatial Plan to guide the prioritization of resources in state waters and to help direct activity in federal waters.

⁴ Florida Select Policy Council on Strategic and Economic Planning, Florida House of Representatives, *Florida Gulf Coast Oil and Gas Risk Assessment*. Prepared by Willis Structured Risk Solutions, April 9, 2010.
⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
⁶ Draft Oil and Gas Bill, Florida House of Representatives, Introduced April 15, 2010.
⁷ “Obama clears way for oil drilling off US coasts.” Retrieved March 31, 2010 from <http://www.aolnews.com/story/obama-clears-way-for-oil-drilling-off-us/970013?cid=10>. Baker, Peter. (May 23, 2010). *Obama Gives a Bipartisan Commission Six Months to Revise Drilling Rules*, New York Times, p. 16.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Florida Ocean Alliance respectfully submits the following recommendations as a first step in opening the dialogue on marine spatial planning in Florida. These recommendations are based on discussions at the 2010 Oceans Day Workshop in Tallahassee on March 10, 2010.

Recommendation 1

A Marine Spatial Plan for Florida should be initiated in 2010, consistent with reports by the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate in 2010 that recommended proceeding with marine spatial planning. The marine spatial planning process should consider opportunities for industry diversification and job creation as a component of a robust and sustainable ocean and coastal economy.

Recommendation 2

The Florida Ocean Alliance and the ocean science community applaud the recent appropriation by the Florida Legislature to provide start-up funding to initiate marine spatial planning. The state appropriation is a positive step, but additional funding will be required to complete the process. Adequate funding should be secured to pursue and complete this marine spatial planning process, either with federal, state or private sector funding, or some combination of these source funds.

Recommendation 3

The Governor and Legislature, singly or in concert, should take a leadership role in the marine spatial planning process by convening a body of ocean and coastal stakeholders in 2010. This body should include ocean industries, state and federal government agency representatives, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the public to help advise the state as it develops a Marine Spatial Plan.

Recommendation 4

The ocean stakeholder group should be charged with developing an inventory of the state’s ocean management issues and begin the process of spatially prioritizing the uses of Florida’s ocean and coastal assets.

Recommendation 5

A communication plan shall be developed immediately to target interested groups of ocean users and engage them in the marine spatial planning process. Information should be provided in a consistent and transparent manner so ocean and coastal stakeholders can work together with both insight and foresight to plan for Florida’s ocean and coastal future.

The final report: “Florida’s Journey Towards Marine Spatial Planning” is available at the Florida Ocean Alliance website: <http://www.floridaoceanalliance.org>