



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### Request for Information; Data for Marine Spatial Studies in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina

**AGENCY:** National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

**ACTION:** Notice; request for information.

**SUMMARY:** NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), hereafter NOAA, in partnership with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), is working to build spatial planning capacity in the Southeast United States Region (Southeast U.S.). Through this notice, NOAA is seeking public input to identify coastal and marine spatial data or other critical information to inform marine spatial analyses in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The input we receive from the data development workshop meeting, as well as the responses to the items listed in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this document, will be used to inform potential coastal and ocean development activities in the Southeast U.S., such as renewable energy development.

**DATES:** Interested persons are invited to provide input in response to this notice through April 30, 2024. Late-filed input will be considered to the extent practicable. Oral input will be accepted during a public meeting to be held in Beaufort, North Carolina on April 9 – 10, 2024.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to provide input using one of the following methods:

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit electronic written public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal. Go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and enter NOAA-NOS-2024-0090908 in the Search box. Click on the "Comment" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. All comments received are a part of the public record

and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA will accept anonymous comments (enter “N/A” in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

- *Oral submission:* NOAA will accept oral input at a data development workshop. The meeting will be held at the NOAA Beaufort Laboratory in Beaufort, North Carolina on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time (ET) and Wednesday, April 10, 2024 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. ET. There will be a registration window from 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. ET each day before the start of the meeting. Advanced registration is required for the meeting by completing the registration form at [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc5Z5zv0jmM-g5AF-WOAxga6lt0Mc2fmK9aYAvnuwI79EktlQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc5Z5zv0jmM-g5AF-WOAxga6lt0Mc2fmK9aYAvnuwI79EktlQ/viewform?usp=sf_link) or by providing an RSVP to Michelle Hobgood at [michelle.hobgood@noaa.gov](mailto:michelle.hobgood@noaa.gov). The registration deadline is Friday, April 5, 2024.

Reports of meeting results will also be published and made available to the public in the weeks following the meeting. If you are unable to provide electronic written comments or participate in the meeting, please contact Michelle Hobgood at [michelle.hobgood@noaa.gov](mailto:michelle.hobgood@noaa.gov) or 980-622-7642 for alternative submission methods.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** James Morris, NOAA NCCOS, at [james.morris@noaa.gov](mailto:james.morris@noaa.gov) or 252-666-7433.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**I. Background**

NOAA is an agency of the United States Federal Government that works to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. NOAA works to make fisheries sustainable and productive, provide safe seafood to consumers, conserve threatened and

endangered species and other protected resources, and maintain healthy ecosystems. NOAA has jurisdiction and responsibility for its trust marine resources in the Southeast U.S. as well as significant interest in supporting the resilience of coastal and marine-dependent communities and promoting equity and environmental justice. For these reasons, it is important for NOAA to invest in research that informs marine spatial studies in the Southeast U.S. region, including socioeconomic research that ensures meaningful participation of local communities and supports equitable processes for planning and siting of new and existing marine industries and conservation areas.

NOAA has been engaged with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to support siting and environmental review for offshore wind energy areas in U.S. Federal waters (<https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy>) to ensure protection of trust resources in any offshore development activities.

## **II. Purpose of This Request for Information**

The purpose of this notice is to promote data development to inform marine spatial studies in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, with an emphasis on data needs for offshore wind energy. In addition to input received from the public through the electronic and oral submissions, NOAA aims to inform the public about its coastal and ocean planning processes and capabilities, discuss the current data available for each ocean sector (e.g., national security, fisheries, industry, natural resources, cultural resources), and gather ideas for other data sources. NOAA hopes to come out of the meetings with a strengthened relationship with the public and a list of best available data and data gaps.

## **III. Specific Information Requested to Inform Marine Spatial Studies in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina**

NOAA seeks written public input to inform marine spatial studies in the Southeast U.S. NOAA is particularly interested in receiving input concerning the items listed below. Responses to this notice are voluntary, and respondents need not reply to items listed. When providing

input, please specify if you are providing general feedback on marine spatial studies and/or if you are responding to one of the specific item number(s) below:

1. Specific datasets related to ocean sectors, natural resources, and/or human activities you recommend NOAA use in marine spatial studies.
2. Major concerns you have related to use of any specific datasets that may be used in marine spatial studies.
3. Major concerns you have related to gaps in scientific knowledge or data that could impact marine spatial planning efforts.
4. Specific data or information you recommend NOAA or other partners collect, if it is not currently available or has not been previously collected.
5. Ways in which NOAA can better engage and collaborate with the public and local communities to promote economic, social, and ecological resilience as well as protect trust resources.

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[FR Doc. 2024-06232 Filed: 3/22/2024 8:45 am; Publication Date: 3/25/2024]