

PRINCIPLES OF OCEAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



PREAMBLE



Our oceans embody extraordinarily dynamic and complex environments that are influenced by a combination of natural forces and human activities. Healthy ocean ecosystems are vital to human health and welfare. Human activities above, below, and on the ocean surface, as well as on land, can and should be managed to allow both use and protection of ocean resources. Principles for managing those activities should embody an ethic of ocean stewardship that protects the public trust, values biodiversity, respects the interdependence of ecosystems, fosters sustainable uses, makes use of the best available information, and encourages public participation in decision-making.

1. Protect the Public Trust

State ocean resources belong to the people of Massachusetts and are held in trust by the state for the benefit of current and future generations. Stewardship of ocean resources should promote beneficial uses balanced with conservation. Management policies should foster enhanced access to the ocean by the public.

2. Value Biodiversity

The diversity of ocean life is important for maintaining healthy and balanced marine and terrestrial ecosystems. A diversity of marine species also provides important societal benefits, some yet to be discovered. Oceans should be managed to protect and enhance the abundance and diversity of native species.



3. Respect the Interdependence of Ecosystems

The health of an ocean ecosystem depends on management policies that respect the interdependence of air, land, and water resources and the interconnection of all species to each other and their habitat. In addition, ecosystems often cross international, federal, state, and local boundaries. Therefore, state ocean management policies should reflect this interdependence and should be coordinated with other jurisdictions.

4. Foster Sustainable Uses

Human needs, such as for food, energy, recreation, and commerce, require ocean management policies that balance competing interests. For the benefit of present and future generations, human uses of the marine and coastal environments should be ecologically sustainable. Ocean management policies should be flexible enough to allow adjustment for evolving human needs and values, emerging technologies, and changing environmental conditions.

5. Use Best Available Information

Effective ocean management should adapt to our evolving knowledge and understanding of the ocean environment. Management decisions should be based on the best available information and expertise, and should consider the accumulating impact of human activity on the environment. Public officials should maintain and enhance the collection of biological, chemical, physical, social, and economic information and communicate this information to the general public.

6. Encourage Public Participation in Decision-Making

Effective ocean management requires the education, support and involvement of citizens, stakeholders and public officials. Education and outreach should encourage an ethic of ocean stewardship. The public should have the opportunity to be engaged in the process that creates ocean management policy. Management policies should ensure that citizens and stakeholders have access to clear, objective, and relevant information on which to base their judgments and positions.



