Principles for Stakeholder Involvement in

Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning

Prepared by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation

December 2011

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Principles for Stakeholder Involvement in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning

Executive Summary

Background

Coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) is one of nine priorities of the National Ocean Policy that was promulgated in an Executive Order signed by President Obama in 2010.[1] CMSP is a forward-thinking public policy process for integrating the management of present and future uses of the nation's oceans and coasts. In order to be both useful and comprehensive, the process for developing coastal and marine spatial plans needs to be participatory, ecosystem based, and adaptive.

The National Ocean Policy (NOP) requires that government decision makers in each region establish planning goals and objectives in consultation with affected groups and citizens. Those goals will be used to guide the development of a coastal and marine spatial plan, and set the stage for the long-term implementation, monitoring and evaluation of that plan. An essential element in the CMSP process is stakeholder engagement, which can support a participatory and adaptive approach to proactive planning for current and future economic, cultural and environmental uses of the ocean.

In the CMSP decision-making process, as outlined in the NOP, decision-making authority is provided to the regional planning bodies, which are composed of federal, tribal, and state officials. The NOP recognizes that the coastal and marine spatial plans will need to respond to the needs of all who rely on the marine environment for economic and environmental services, and that effective consultation with the full range of these groups is essential to build the relationships needed to achieve national and regional goals for ocean management. Therefore, stakeholder involvement in the development of regional plans is an important responsibility assigned to the regional planning bodies.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overarching set of suggested principles for effectively engaging all stakeholders in a CMSP process. In developing this informational resource document, the Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) reviewed current and past CMSP stakeholder processes in the United States and internationally, analyzed academic literature on stakeholder engagement best practices, and reviewed surveys and white papers about desirable stakeholder involvement mechanisms from various interest groups, including government, tribal, environmental and ocean user groups. The principles described in this document are drawn from this research and from the U.S. Institute's experience in developing similar guidelines for a range of complex federal and regional stakeholder involvement efforts.

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[1] The full text of the Executive Order and the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force can be viewed at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans/policy .

CMSP Stakeholders

All citizens have a stake in the management of ocean and coastal resources. However, defining the term stakeholders with respect to ocean management is particularly challenging due to the varying degrees of interest and capacity that different groups may have to participate in the process. In general, interested stakeholders can be grouped into three overarching categories:

- Obviously affected governmental and non-governmental economic, cultural, and environmental interests that are very motivated to participate in stakeholder meetings and interactions;
- Loosely organized or non-organized affected interests that may not participate in all stakeholder interactions but have an interest in participating in the planning process in areas that affect them; and
- Members of the public who may or may not participate but need to be informed along with all other stakeholders about the CMSP process, goals, and products.

To be efficient and effective, stakeholder involvement approaches for CMSP should take into account the unique needs of the different categories of stakeholders in the process, including the varying levels of capacity and interest that stakeholders may have to participate in the process. The tools and techniques used to engage various stakeholder groups may differ depending on the level of complexity of the discussions and each group's level of desired engagement on the issues.

In this document, the term stakeholder refers to those organized and less organized entities and interests who can contribute information and support to the CMSP process, and who have the capacity and resources for ongoing participation in the process. Stakeholder interests in CMSP may include, but are not limited to, commercial and recreational fishers, marine transportation, environmental advocacy groups, energy sectors (oil and gas, and renewable energy), federal, tribal, state, county and local governments, businesses (shipping, marine trades, tourism, recreation, aquaculture, etc.), recreational groups, homeland security agencies (e.g., US Coast Guard), and national security agencies (e.g., US Navy). Geographic interests may include specific coastal or inland regions or communities and neighboring counties, reservations, states, or countries. Inclusion of underserved communities is essential to creating a balanced plan. Many federal, state and tribal interests will be directly involved in the planning efforts of the Regional Planning Bodies as decision makers and implementers for the plan.

While the purpose of this document is to describe best practices for engaging stakeholders in the CMSP, the principles in this document may be applied to the ongoing, consistent involvement of all groups.

Essential Principles for Meaningful Stakeholder Involvement Processes

The U.S. Institute has identified the following principles for creating meaningful stakeholder involvement in the CMSP process. The sub-bullets highlight suggested measures of the effectiveness of the implementation of each principle..

1. **Clear Goals and Avenues for Stakeholder and Public Participation**

    - The goals, schedule, and reasons for the planning process are communicated publicly and include a clear map of the CMSP decision process and stakeholder input points.
    - Public and stakeholder involvement is developed and implemented in consultation with the stakeholder groups.
    - Roles for the regional planning body agencies (e.g., leadership, decision making, staffing, information gathering, etc.), stakeholders and the public (e.g., comment on plans and products, provide relevant information, distribute information to their colleagues and communities, make suggestions, etc.) are clearly established.
    - Stakeholder involvement is institutionalized (e.g., a standing stakeholder advisory group is established with ground rules for participation that are fair and balanced, agreed upon by the stakeholders, and cover accountability and participant responsibilities, or there is some other regular consultation process with the full range of stakeholders).

2. **Inclusiveness and Accessibility**
    - Stakeholder participation and representation includes the full range of interests in national and regional coastal and ocean planning.
    - Barriers to participation are identified and addressed before and during convening of the stakeholders.
    - Engagement processes accommodate those stakeholders with varying levels of interest and resources through a variety of effective engagement mechanisms.

3. **Transparency and Openness**
    - Information about the decision process and supporting information for the plan are publicly available for review and comment.
    - Stakeholders have access to the regional planning body through consistent and appropriate communication channels.
    - Decision makers are open to learning from stakeholders and take their ideas into consideration.
    - Decision makers provide feedback to stakeholders about how their input has been taken into consideration and describe how that input has shaped interim and final products.

4. **Informed Engagement**
   - Quality, informed discussion and engagement occur throughout all phases of the CMSP process.
   - Stakeholders and planners engage in a process of mutual education to improve overall knowledge about the process and subject matter, and to enhance substantive discussions.
   - Interactive and informed discussions take place among agencies, regional planning bodies, and stakeholders.
   - Technical information is provided in an appropriate format for stakeholder and public use.
   - Stakeholders have access to technical experts and input into scientific and technical aspects of the planning process.
   - Stakeholder knowledge and data is evaluated for possible inclusion into the plan.

5. **Timeliness**
   - Participation occurs at a time that allows stakeholder input to be used in the development of the products of the planning process.
   - Stakeholders have sufficient notice of meetings and advance materials to realistically and effectively participate.

6. **Process Integrity**
   - Stakeholders have confidence in the value of the process.
   - The planning body and the stakeholders hold themselves accountable for meaningful participation in the CMSP process.

7. **Adaptability and Flexibility**
   - As needs and issues evolve, additional options for stakeholder engagement are developed.
   - Engagement methods take into consideration unique regional and local features.
   - Stakeholder processes are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

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The purpose of this document is to provide an overarching set of suggested principles for effectively engaging all stakeholders in a CMSP process. In developing this informational resource document, the Udall Foundation's U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) reviewed current and past CMSP stakeholder processes in the United States and internationally, analyzed academic literature on stakeholder engagement best practices, and reviewed surveys and white papers about desirable stakeholder involvement mechanisms from various interest groups, including government, tribal, environmental and ocean user groups. The principles described in this document are drawn from this research and from the U.S. Institute's experience in developing similar guidelines for a range of complex federal and regional stakeholder involvement efforts.

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To be efficient and effective, stakeholder involvement approaches for CMSP should take into account the unique needs of the different categories of stakeholders in the process, including the varying levels of capacity and interest that stakeholders may have to participate in the process. The tools and techniques used to engage various stakeholder groups may differ depending on the level of complexity of the discussions and each group's level of desired engagement on the issues.

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1. Clear Goals and Avenues for Stakeholder and Public Participation

In order for stakeholder and public engagement to effectively create two-way communication and collaborative problem solving on ocean management issues, the goals of the planning process, the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and the planning body, and engagement processes and milestones need to be identified and clearly communicated to all parties.

How this principle can be achieved in CMSP: CMSP at the national and regional levels is a complex, multi-entity process. The National Ocean Policy sets out a process of coordination at a national level with regional implementation that will require the extensive and sustainable involvement of those entities involved in developing the coastal and ocean management plan, as well as those who will be affected by the plan. A clear understanding of the stakeholder involvement process is essential in developing ocean management goals, data and information needs, and management and monitoring options which may be supported by all impacted entities.

Some initial steps to implement this goal may include:

❖ **Communicate the goals and schedule for the planning process.** Providing information about the planning process, such as the reasons that planning is needed, as well as the planning process schedule and milestones, will help build a mutual understanding of how stakeholders and the public may be involved in the process, and alleviate concerns among those groups related to the uncertainty of their involvement in the process.   To accomplish this objective, it will be helpful to create and disseminate a map of the CMSP decision process with stakeholder and public input points clearly outlined.

❖ **Develop, communicate and implement public and stakeholder involvement in consultation with the stakeholder groups**. Establishing and implementing an engagement plan in consultation with stakeholders will help incorporate the full range of perspectives in the plan, establish rapport among key entities, and build broad support for the implementation of the stakeholder involvement plan. An early assessment of the concerns of all stakeholders and their ideas for involvement in the process is essential to the development of this approach. As part of that assessment, individual interviews with the full range of key interest groups, preferably conducted by a neutral entity, can identify stakeholder needs, as well as sensitive issues that may not be raised through other involvement activities.

❖ **Clearly delineate roles for the regional planning body agencies, stakeholders and the public**. The roles and responsibilities of the RPB members, the stakeholders, and the general public should be clearly defined to avoid confusion and promote a mutual understanding of the CMSP planning process. Agency roles may include leadership, decision making, staffing, information gathering, data analysis, and drafting of preliminary and final documents, among others. Stakeholder and public roles may include commenting on proposals and processes, providing relevant data and

information, bringing information about the planning process to others in their interest group, identifying implementation issues and concerns, and suggesting alternative approaches, among others.

❖ **Institutionalize stakeholder involvement.** One method that may be used to institutionalize stakeholder involvement is the establishment of a standing stakeholder advisory group. Stakeholder advisory groups may be implemented at a regional or sub-regional level, and can help create a forum for groups that are invested in learning about CMSP and contributing significant time and effort to the planning process. Advisory groups are effective at providing consistent cross-sector stakeholder dialogue and insight into the planning process. A stakeholder advisory group should reflect the broadest range of interests that is possible in order to serve as a link to all sectors of stakeholders affected by the plan. The National Ocean Policy assigns the regional planning body the task of developing stakeholder engagement mechanisms and thus the RPB is the appropriate body for establishing any standing advisory group.

In some cases, especially across large geographic areas, a stakeholder advisory group may not be appropriate or feasible. Before convening a stakeholder advisory group, each region should assess the stakeholder engagement needs in discussions with the stakeholders themselves. The regional planning body should examine the potential barriers to the success of an advisory group (e.g., lack of funding for participation, lack of stakeholder capacity to participate, geographic barriers to convening a group, lack of resources to support public meetings, etc.). A neutral assessment of stakeholder interests and barriers to participation can help inform the decision about the development and organization of a stakeholder advisory group. Each stakeholder group should be tailored to the specific nature of the region. Variations may occur on such elements as membership, size, meeting intensity, and decision making processes.

For any stakeholder advisory group to be constructive and collaborative, it is important to have clear, fair and balanced ground rules for participation, that are agreed upon by the stakeholders and that cover the objectives for the process, participant and agency responsibilities, accountability and expectations for involvement.

Example of the application of this principle: In the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan stakeholder process, the state agency responsible for developing the plan outlined and made public all of the following at the start of the process:

- The objectives proposed for the planning effort, as outlined in enabling legislation.
- The membership of a standing stakeholder advisory group.
- The membership of an inter-agency data gathering and management team.
- The membership of an inter-disciplinary group of science advisors.

- The schedule for eighteen public listening sessions throughout the state, including non-coastal areas.
- The plan for three public stakeholder meetings to review progress at key milestones (data aggregation, preliminary concepts for area designations, proposed specific area designations on a map).
- A plan for conducting two public hearings on the draft plan with a written comment period.
- An online resource with materials, meeting summaries, comments, virtual access to events, etc.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Develop CMSP planning process goals that explicitly include goals related to stakeholder and public engagement.
- Establish a public information effort to educate stakeholder groups and the coastal and non-coastal public about the purpose of the CMSP effort, the objectives for the planning process, and the process schedule.
- Create and disseminate a map of the CMSP decision process with stakeholder and public input points clearly outlined.
- Develop outreach tools, such as a public website, information sheets, webinars, etc., to communicate information about the CMSP planning process, including the public and stakeholder involvement components, and to highlight progress on the planning tasks.
- Conduct an assessment by an impartial entity or individual to identify the key stakeholders, as well as their concerns about access to the decision-making process, and the most feasible methods of providing their detailed input into the CMSP process. This assessment can serve as the basis for the decisions that regional planning bodies make regarding nominations to any standing stakeholder advisory group that may be developed and may guide the development of any other institutionalized consultation and dialogue forums.
- Publicize the names of the standing stakeholder group members and their representatives to enable members of their constituencies to contact them and establish a working relationship.
- Consider establishing a regional stakeholder advisory group to create a meaningful role for groups that are invested in learning about and contributing significant time and resources to the planning process, and to provide consistent and significant stakeholder insight into the planning process. One approach for balancing the different interests in such a group includes equalizing the number of seats in three categories: government, business interests, and environmental interests, with additional seats as needed for other interests.
- Convene all stakeholder meetings (including the stakeholder advisory group) in public.

2. Inclusiveness and Accessibility

A balanced and representative stakeholder engagement process provides a platform to incorporate diverse voices, ideas, and information in the planning process, which will help develop quality outcomes in the CMS Plan. It is important that all affected and interested stakeholder groups and members of the public are provided an adequate and appropriate opportunity to participate in the CMSP process to ensure that all interests and potential or actual conflicts are addressed, and to increase support for and satisfaction with the outputs of the CMSP process.

How the principle can be achieved in CMSP: Inclusivity requires providing outreach to the full range of interest groups and developing forums that will encourage participation of those groups. An accessible process is one in which potential barriers to participation are identified and addressed.

The following steps may improve inclusiveness and accessibility for stakeholders and the public in CMSP:

❖ **Ensure that stakeholder participation and representation includes the full range of diverse interests in CMSP.** Stakeholder interests in CMSP may include, but are not limited to, commercial and recreational fishers, marine transportation, environmental advocacy groups, energy sectors (oil and gas, and renewable energy), federal, tribal, state, county and local governments, businesses (including shipping, marine trades, tourism, recreation, aquaculture, etc.), recreational groups, security agencies (US Coast Guard) and the military.   Geographic interests may include specific coastal or inland regions or communities and neighboring counties, reservations, states, or countries. Inclusion of underserved communities is essential to creating a balanced plan. In selecting members of any stakeholder advisory group, care should be taken to achieve credibility through inclusiveness and balance among all affected interests.

❖ **Identify essential stakeholders and address barriers to participation.** Participation barriers in stakeholder engagement processes have the potential to minimize the effectiveness of those processes. Examples of barriers to stakeholder and public participation include:
- Funding – Stakeholders may not have adequate funding to travel to and participate in workshops and meetings.
- Timing – The CMSP schedule may not allow adequate time for stakeholders to review and provide comments on draft and final products.
- Capacity – Stakeholder groups may not have staff and/or other resources for participation in standing committees, such as a stakeholder advisory group.
- Accessibility – Stakeholders and the public may be in locations that are not conducive to attending regional public workshops and meetings. Bringing information to forums that are closer to the stakeholder locations may be necessary; web streaming can help improve participation opportunities.

- Information – Stakeholders and the public may not have adequate information about the CMSP process or substantive issues to participate in a meaningful way.[3]

Many of these barriers are the result of resource limitations for stakeholder groups, governmental participants and regional planning bodies. If resources or strategies cannot be found to overcome these barriers, then the expectations for stakeholder involvement may need to be refined downwards, and expectations for successful implementation of the products of the planning process may also need to be lowered.

❖ **Engagement processes need to accommodate and match the needs of stakeholder groups and the public with varying levels of interest and resources.** A particular stakeholder's interest in participating in CMSP will often correlate to the degree that the group or person is impacted by the outcomes of the process. Some stakeholders, such as fishers, energy developers, and environmental interests, who are impacted considerably by CMSP, may be willing to participate in time-intensive activities, such as committees or workshops. Other stakeholders, and some members of the public, may be satisfied with educational information provided through a website, written materials, or a public meeting.   Matching the engagement tools to the various needs of interest groups is an important factor in achieving inclusivity and accessibility. All regional planning bodies need to undertake broad outreach to inform individuals about the CMSP process, so they can decide whether, or how, they want to be involved. They also need to use a variety of tools to ensure that all affected interests are involved to the extent that reasonably meets their needs.

Example of the application of this principle: In several CMSP processes, direct outreach to fishers and to representatives of Native American Tribes, often in one-on-one meetings has been an essential element of ensuring inclusivity. For example, in Massachusetts, planners met with individual fishing groups to gain information about specific fishing grounds and practices. In Rhode Island, planners conducted intensive outreach to tribes on historic cultural lands.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:
- Complete a situation assessment or stakeholder analysis, conducted by an impartial entity to identify barriers to participation and inform the stakeholder engagement process. The assessment should identify:
    o Barriers to participation and involvement, and strategies to overcome those barriers.
    o Options to engage underserved or traditionally overlooked communities.
    o Funding options for interested parties that are resource constrained.

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[3] Methods for addressing information barriers are described in Principle 4.

- - - o Performance measures to gauge the extent of engagement of stakeholder and public engagement.
    - o Key stakeholder groups and potential representatives for any standing stakeholder advisory group.
- Establish a balanced stakeholder advisory group as a liaison between stakeholders and the regional planning bodies to ensure an inclusive and robust engagement with affected stakeholder communities.
- Develop a website and written materials, and hold public meetings and/or webcasts to educate stakeholders about how they can participate in the CMSP process and how their input will be used.
- Consider subsidizing participation for some groups; this may be necessary to be appropriately inclusive. Financial support for travel expenses will probably be essential for groups that meet regionally.
- Conduct meetings at the sub-regional level to enhance accessibility.
- Whenever possible, web stream meetings in real time to address accessibility barriers.

3. Transparency and Openness

Being transparent and open can help develop an understanding of and support for complex public planning processes among interest groups and the public. To be transparent, planning and decision-making about the design, research, analysis, and options for the coastal and marine spatial plan should be communicated to the public, and in many cases, these topics should be discussed in public, with considerable exploration of the benefits and drawbacks of the various options.

In the CMSP context, openness means that the planning processes and the regional planning bodies actively solicit feedback, and are truly amenable to listening to and using the input from user groups, conservation interests, governmental entities, and other constituencies who will be affected by the plan. In addition, openness means that stakeholders and members of the public have appropriate access to the planning process, which was discussed in the previous section of this document.

How the principle can be achieved in CMSP: Being clear about participation in the process, as well as adequate information-sharing, and providing avenues for meaningful input into the planning and decision making processes are essential components of the transparency and openness principle. In addition, openness and transparency can be enhanced by the following actions:

❖ **Make information about the decision process and supporting plan information publicly available for review and comment.** Providing timely and useful information can help build trust with stakeholders and members of the public and credibility for the plan. Multi-tiered communication tools, including websites, public meetings and workshops, written materials, and stakeholder meetings, can be used to disseminate information and gather feedback.

❖ **Provide stakeholders with access to the regional planning body through consistent and appropriate communication channels.** Regional planning bodies need to establish avenues for two-way communication with stakeholders and the public as a means to distribute important information, and to gather useful feedback. Web sites and wikis with two-way communication are useful tools to augment public meetings. Publication of documents for comment by the stakeholders also supports this principle.

❖ **Decision makers demonstrate openness to learning from stakeholders and take their ideas into consideration.** Engagement that empowers stakeholders to provide important information on their diverse perspectives, issues, and concerns, and broadens the information that the regional planning bodies have available for decision making is important in CMSP. Implementing this principle requires early consultation and discussion with stakeholder groups and the public, eliciting information about concerns from the earliest stages of the process, and repeatedly reaching out for specific information and comments at the various stages throughout the entire process.

❖ **Provide feedback to the public and stakeholders about how their input has been taken into consideration and describe how that input has shaped interim and final products.** To promote effective engagement, it is important to communicate to stakeholders and the public how input received from those groups was used in the decision making process. This step helps build a mutual understanding of the decision making process, enhances transparency in the process, and engenders trust among the parties.

Example of the application of this principle: In the Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan process, openness and transparency were reflected in the following ways:

- The Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan meetings, locations, notices and materials were all accessible on the project website.

    o The website listed all meetings and locations, agendas, materials to be covered, and transcripts; the website includes a "Documents" page which provides all materials, agendas, press, presentations, technical and science reports.

- An eight step public review process for each chapter of the plan was clearly laid out at the start.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Devise and implement a suite of communication tools and techniques to inform, educate, and receive feedback from stakeholders and the public. These tools may include:
    o Public meetings and workshops
    o Web tools for providing information and receiving comments
    o Written Materials
    o Comment Forms
    o Surveys
- Promote a common understanding of key process elements through education on procedural and technical terms, and the preparation of analyses and reports in language that promotes a public understanding of them.
- Inform stakeholders about how they may provide input in the CMSP process, and how that input will be used.
- Report back to the public and stakeholders about how their input has been taken into consideration and describe its impact on the interim and final products.
- Provide concise summaries of all stakeholder, science and public meetings to the public.

4. Informed Engagement

For engagement to have a positive impact on CMSP, the participants need to be educated and informed about the subjects that will be discussed and about the goals and elements of the planning process. Differences in the levels of knowledge and familiarity with ocean issues among the planning body representatives, various stakeholder representatives, and the public will be a challenge in most, if not all, planning processes. Therefore, developing a shared understanding of the ocean management issues that need to be addressed and the information that is available to address them is a key element of successful stakeholder involvement and support for the eventual plan.

How this principle can be achieved in CMSP: Building public understanding, bridging the knowledge gaps among stakeholder groups, creating useful stakeholder dialogue, and developing an understanding about the planning challenges and potential solutions will be essential for the creation of a plan that is implementable and acceptable. Principles for informed engagement include the following:

❖ **Quality, informed discussion and engagement needs to occur throughout all phases of the CMSP process**. High quality, informed engagement should occur throughout the process, including in the scoping, data collection, development and evaluation of alternative scenarios, and action selection. In addition, engagement efforts should be tailored to the needs of the participants and to the stages of the process. For example, participation for meetings early in the process could be more open and engage a broad range of stakeholders and members of the public in an effort to assess the diversity of concerns and issues. Later in the process, as data is accumulated, maps are drawn, and compatible and incompatible uses are identified, information used in the engagement process will need to be much more targeted and specific. At every meeting, the stakeholders need to be oriented to the current stage of the process and the relationship of that stage to the tasks and schedule for the complete CMSP process.

❖ **Planners should engage with stakeholders in mutual education about the process and subject matter to enhance engagement in substantive discussions**. In order to engage stakeholders and the public in a meaningful way, to limit frustrations, and to keep pace with the planning process, the stakeholders, public and the planners will need to engage in mutual education on key topics. It is expected that stakeholders who have a large degree of involvement in the process will engage in the most in-depth information-sharing. For standing stakeholder advisory group meetings, written materials, including background papers and maps, along with presentations by subject matter experts with a variety of perspectives will be essential. Some of the more basic materials, along with clear, concise PowerPoint presentations, can also promote quality dialogue in meetings open to the general public. All materials should be publicly available on a web site.

- ❖ I**nteractive discussions need to occur among agencies, regional planning bodies, and stakeholders**. Interactive meetings present opportunities for more robust discussions than informational meetings. During interactive meetings, small group discussions of key issues in combination with brief presentations can help build an understanding of interests and concerns that come from multiple points of view. Interactive and informed discussions help establish a quality dialogue and build a deeper understanding of key issues and perspectives.
- ❖ **Technical information needs to be provided in an appropriate format for stakeholder and public use**. Stakeholders and the public may not be able to digest large, complex technical reports. Therefore, it is important to summarize reports using non-technical language and highlight key points that are important when considering and understanding the decisions that will be made in the planning process. Visualization and other decision support tools have proven very useful in the CMSP processes that have been undertaken in recent years.
- ❖ **Stakeholders should have access to technical experts and input into scientific and technical aspects of the planning process**. Scientific and technical experts can help bridge the knowledge gap that exists between scientists, policy makers, stakeholder groups, and the public. Implementing this principle could involve holding open meetings to provide technical presentations to and discussions with the stakeholders about data sources, data management tools, and preliminary analyses as they are developed. Establishing the credibility of the data management tools is a key element of the task of establishing legitimacy for the CMSP products.
- ❖ **Stakeholder knowledge and data should be evaluated for possible inclusion into the plan**. Many stakeholder groups have social, cultural, ecological, economic, human use, and other data that are relevant to ocean management. These data may exist in environmental impact statements, feasibility studies for projects, permitting processes, ocean and fisheries management plans and other stakeholder data bases and knowledge sources. The extent to which this information will be included in the planning process should be discussed with the stakeholders. Certain stakeholders may also have traditional and experiential place-based knowledge to share. This information is sometimes sensitive, and it may be important in developing ocean management plans. For example, historic fishing areas are often not discussed publicly, yet the information needs to be considered in the development of the plan. One-on-one conversations between the plan developers and tribes and fishing groups will be needed to develop a plan that will incorporate this sensitive information.

Example of the application of this principle: Massachusetts and Rhode Island both conducted technical education sessions.

- In Massachusetts the learning phase included a series of statewide workshops and Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs presentations where the standing Ocean Advisory Commission,

made up of 17 organizations, agencies, and interests, the Science Advisory Council and stakeholders all reviewed the information available for the planning process.

- In Rhode Island, the learning phase included presentations from experts on the physical geography, scientific and technical aspects of the Special Area Management Plan project, public policies, and more. The Rhode Island planning process also included engagement with those with traditional knowledge and incorporation of that knowledge into the plan. To further inform stakeholders, workshops and a lecture series were an integral part of the process that occurred throughout the review process for the plan.

- During the California Marine Life Protection Act Initiative, stakeholders had access to technical data through an interactive visualization tool, MarineMap. The MarineMap program was developed in response to some frustration with the tools available for stakeholders to evaluate options for the Initiative. The MarineMap team recognized the need for something more efficient and transparent that would allow stakeholders to cooperatively build marine protected area proposals in public meetings and at home, where they could consult with constituents.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Provide impartial facilitation to enhance the interactive nature of meetings with stakeholders, scientists, and planning bodies.
- Develop technological tools, such as GIS and modeling programs to assess options and data in a way that is balanced and not biased towards any specific interest or outcome.
- Work with technical experts to tailor presentations to the level of understanding of any stakeholder or public group.
- Provide web access to reports and analyses for the public and stakeholders.
- Conduct workshops for stakeholders and the public to bring relevant information to them for their consideration and review.
- Establish mechanisms to collect stakeholder input (including traditional and experiential knowledge) such as workshops, comments forms, surveys, and interviews, and provide feedback on how that input is used.

5. Timeliness

Often during planning processes, a fairly well-defined product is developed prior to gaining significant public and stakeholder input. In some controversial and complex situations, there may be signifigant opposition to these products and planning bodies often spend considerable time and resources to revisit the initial product to compensate for this oversight.

As noted earlier, meaningful stakeholder interaction needs to occur at multiple points during the CMSP process, from the earliest planning stages through problem definition and goal setting, to data accumulation and analysis, and to the development of alternative scenarios for consideration. For engagement to be successful, it is important that the stakeholders and the public have sufficient notice and time to assure their participation throughout all of these stages.

How this principle can be achieved in CMSP: Matching stakeholder participation to the milestones in the planning process is essential in applying this principle. Engagement is generally useful before and after each planning milestone (e.g. after data sources have been identified and analyses are possible).

❖ **Participation needs to occur at a time that allows input from stakeholders to be used in the development of the products of the planning process.** It is important for stakeholders to be assured that their input and information will have an impact on the planning process. This will be difficult to achieve if their input is sought after major decisions and planning directions have already been determined. Stakeholder and public comment periods should be at least four to six weeks in duration, to allow a thorough review of documents and coordination of comments. To accomplish this goal, the planning process should be well thought out, and the timing of stakeholder and public engagement and review periods should be planned in some detail.

❖ **Stakeholders and the public need sufficient notice of meetings and advance materials to realistically and effectively participate.** Adequate notice for a stakeholder or public meeting is at least three weeks in advance, and more if possible. Less notice can create a barrier to the participation of some groups. Preliminary materials for meeting discussions should be distributed no less than one week in advance to allow adequate preparation time for stakeholder discussions.

Example of the application of this principle: The Massachusetts Ocean Partnership website provides an example of a timeline that allows for stakeholder understanding of the process and clear delineation of input points:

- An interactive timeline on the website lays out the entire process, and not only when and where the stakeholder engagement sessions are, but every facet of the project – meetings, conferences, newspaper stories released, legislation passed, etc.

- The timeline extends into the future, including the implementation phase.
- All materials from past meetings are accessible, and information and materials are clearly labeled.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Develop the planning process schedule with stakeholder and public engagement in mind.
- Develop and communicate a master schedule of the project timeline, key deliverables requiring input, and anticipated and expected stakeholder meetings over the course of the planning process. If schedules change, publicly acknowledge and explain the reasons for the change and describe the resulting schedule adjustment.
- Establish web site access for schedules and materials, including materials from past meetings.
- Provide at least three weeks' notice of all public meetings.
- Provide background materials at least one week in advance of meetings.

6. Process Integrity

Stakeholder involvement processes should be designed to achieve a high level of public trust and credibility in the planning process and the resulting plan. Stakeholder and public involvement processes lose credibility and acceptability if they are, or are perceived to be, biased toward one specific outcome or interest group. They also lose credibility if they are unreliable in some way, for example, if meetings are frequently unannounced or cancelled, or if funding to support the staffing and logistics for the stakeholder process is not available. If stakeholders lose trust in the process, they may become disengaged, or find other avenues outside of the planning process to address their interests. Planners should work diligently to assure the process is fair and equitable, reflects impartial balancing of interests, and reliably engages stakeholders and the public.

How this principle can be achieved in CMSP: Adherence to several of the other principles outlined in this document, in addition to the points suggested below, will help ensure process integrity, and build trust and credibility among stakeholders and the public. Integrity and accountability are essential to the success of the stakeholder and public involvement effort and are often measured by the following standards.

❖ **Stakeholders have confidence in the value of the process**. Stakeholder groups and the public will judge the involvement process by the following criteria, among others:
   - The relative balance of participation among the various interests involved.
   - The reliability of the timetable and predictability of the process as outlined by the sponsors.
   - The level of engagement that is encouraged, including sufficient opportunities to provide input.
   - Stakeholder input is openly accepted, considered, and addressed.
   - Stakeholder input is included in the product, and that inclusion is communicated to the stakeholders.
   - All of the interest groups are treated with equal concern and responsiveness.
   - No one is disadvantaged by the design of the stakeholder process. That is, all interests perceive that they have a chance of achieving their goals in the process.
   - The final product reflects a balance of the various interests and needs.
   - Stakeholder needs and concerns are heard and addressed.
❖ **The planning body and the stakeholders hold themselves accountable for meaningful participation in the CMSP process.** Effective stakeholder processes require a joint commitment from the stakeholders and the sponsors to fulfill their participation responsibilities, which includes follow-through on planned actions, maintaining regular interactions, producing and

disseminating products, and exhibiting receptivity to different perspectives, new information, and new ideas. When events and schedules do not go as planned, the reasons should be evaluated and the consequences should be jointly considered.   Staffing for stakeholder activities is important in creating integrity and follow- through on behalf of the planning body.

Example of the application of this principle: The Rhode Island Special Area Management Plan process ensured procedural integrity in several ways:

- From the beginning of the process, a neutral third party assisted with stakeholder engagement.
- The first stakeholder meeting included information about the engagement process, and described the different stakeholder concerns, while making a point to address this in a dialogue format.
- All meeting notes were published on the project website, allowing anyone to read initial concerns and how they were addressed.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Establish ground rules for participation that outline responsibilities, commitments, and authorities. These are especially important for standing stakeholder advisory groups, and should be subject to discussion and agreement among the participants.
- Ensure a credible, standing stakeholder advisory group by conducting an assessment of the full range of viewpoints and interest groups before a standing stakeholder group is convened. The assessment can be conducted by a neutral third party to help establish trust in the results. A product of the assessment should be a description of a balanced set of interest groups who could be invited by the regional planning body to participate in the standing stakeholder advisory group.
- Encourage inclusive and balanced dialogue among regional planning bodies and stakeholders through facilitated discussions (and web discussions if applicable). Develop and communicate a master schedule of the project timeline, key deliverables requiring input, and anticipated stakeholder meetings over the course of the planning process.
- Produce impartial summaries of stakeholder discussions that clearly summarize the key themes and varying points of view in a transparent manner. The use of a neutral third party to develop these summaries can help create credibility and accountability for meetings.
- Develop and disseminate a realistic agenda for each meeting and use it to create predictable discussion and to provide stakeholders the opportunity to adequately prepare for the meeting.

7. Adaptability and Flexibility

Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning is a long-term policy implementation process that will take place over several years, if not decades. New information will arise during the planning process, new stakeholder groups will emerge, staff changes will occur in governmental and non-governmental organizations, and new ocean activities will arise as others decline. Any stakeholder engagement effort will need to be flexible and resilient enough to adapt to these, and other, circumstances.

How this principle can be achieved in CMSP: Due to the long-term regional nature of CMSP, adaptability and flexibility will be key components of the stakeholder engagement process. This principle can be implemented with the following components.

❖ **As needs and issues evolve, additional options for stakeholder engagement may need to be developed.** The need for changes to the engagement process might arise through a process evaluation, changing circumstances, or through requests from stakeholder groups and members of the public.   Additional venues for discussion, additional educational workshops, or additional public information mechanisms may be required. Matching the forums to the needs of the planning process and the needs of the stakeholders and public is an important element in ensuring process integrity.

❖ **Engagement methods need to take into consideration unique regional and local features.** CMSP processes and policies established by the NOC at a national level will need to allow enough flexibility for the regional planning bodies to develop engagement processes that account for their own unique situations. The CMSP regions called for in the National Ocean Policy Task Force recommendations cover large geographic, multi-state areas. In addition, each region is unique from every other region, and may be different in terms of stakeholder interests, driving issues, cultures, relationships among sponsors and stakeholders, financial situations, etc. While broad goals for stakeholder and public engagement may be established at a national level by the NOC, each regional planning body will need the flexibility to best meet the unique needs of that region. In addition, the regional planning bodies must be aware of, and be willing to address, the unique needs for stakeholder engagement that may exist in sub-regions of their own jurisdiction.

❖ **Stakeholder processes need to be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.** Process evaluations provide an avenue for the regional planning bodies, stakeholders, and the public to assess the effectiveness of the engagement process. Engagement processes should be reviewed at least annually to determine what is working well and what needs to be improved. The reviews can take place through on-line surveys, interviews with key stakeholders, and various other comment processes. The results of the annual reviews should be made available to stakeholders and the public.

Example of the application of this principle: The California Marine Life Protection Act planning process divided the state into five regions in order to be flexible and adaptable to regional issues. As each region developed management plans, other regions and the planners adapted the process based on the lessons learned in earlier processes.

- The state also sponsored evaluations of the sub-regional efforts in which neutral parties evaluated the process for each region, detailing lessons learned and suggestions for the subsequent regions.
- Regions took those evaluations into consideration and adapted their processes.
  - This flexibility was most apparent in the draft proposal development process and the way in which stakeholders were divided into groups to draft proposals.
  - The process was modified to allow for greater "convergence" of interests, according to the third party neutral facilitating the stakeholder groups.
  - Modifications to the stakeholder processes were made in light of differing regional conditions, both physical and social.

Best practices, tools, and techniques for achieving this principle:

- Establish performance measures and goals for the engagement process at a national and regional level. Some of the measures can be drawn from the principles in this report.
- Employ an array of measurement tools, such as surveys, comment forms, or assessments, to gauge the effectiveness of the engagement process on at least an annual basis.
- Reassess the engagement process periodically, and establish new methods to address the gaps where the process is not meeting expectations.
- Conduct an impartial assessment for each region, focused on the issues specific to that region, and develop revisions to the engagement strategy based on the findings of that assessment.
- Evaluations may be needed at the sub-regional level.

Appendix A: A Compendium of Tools and Practices for Achieving Effective Stakeholder and Public Engagement in CMSP

This appendix summarizes the practices, tools, and techniques that may be utilized to help engage stakeholders in a CMSP effort. The majority of these items have been discussed in the body of this document.

Evaluations of Stakeholder Engagement Processes: Process evaluations provide information about what is happening in the engagement process, and what areas need additional attention or improvements. This tool usually includes examining, describing and documenting the process. Data may be gathered through interviews, surveys, or comment forms. It is recommended that process evaluations take place at a regional level on an annual basis.

Neutral Third-Party Facilitation: A neutral third-party is an impartial person, or group of people, that has no financial, professional, or personal interest in the results of the CMSP process. The neutral entity should have the trust of all parties, and may be called upon to conduct a situation assessment, help design and facilitate the stakeholder and/or public engagement process, facilitate and document meeting discussions, and assist in the resolution of disputes.

Outreach and Communication Tools/Techniques: These tools and techniques are used to share information and educate stakeholders on specific issues. They may also be used as feedback mechanisms to gather public comments. Some common communication tools include:

- Public websites
- Web-casts
- GIS maps
- Decision support tools
- Workshops, roundtables, and public meetings
- Written information materials such as mailings and FAQs, and comment forms or surveys

Process Documentation: Process documentation is a historical repository of products that have been developed, and events that have occurred throughout the CMSP process. It is important that relevant process documentation is accessible to the public to ensure transparency and improve the accountability of the decision making process. Where impartiality is deemed important, such as with meeting notes or assessment reports, neutral third-party assistance for process documentation is recommended. Some forms of process documentation include:

- Status reports
- Meeting summaries
- Workplans and documents that track progress against the workplans
- Assessment reports
- All draft and final products from the planning process

Situation Assessment: A situation assessment is a tool used to gain an understanding of the involved parties (i.e. stakeholders, communities, agencies, Tribes, etc.), the different positions and perspectives, underlying interests, relationship dynamics, barriers to participation and other elements that may factor into stakeholder and public engagement planning. Typically completed before planning the stakeholder engagement effort, it is often beneficial to engage a neutral third-party to complete the situation assessment to help establish impartiality in the process, and build trust and credibility in the results.

Stakeholder Advisory Group: A standing, multi-interest group of regional stakeholder representatives that provides a forum to share information, discuss issues, and gather feedback on key CMSP issues. The stakeholder advisory group should be balanced across a full-range of interests, and have some degree of self-determination, while maintaining a direct link with the regional planning bodies. The role of the stakeholder advisory group is to provide suggestions, input or recommendations to the regional planning body that reflect those stakeholder interests that are not regular regional planning body members.   These groups usually require some additional structure, using a Charter, by-laws, or set of ground rules, that establish clear, fair and balanced rules for participation, agreed upon by the stakeholders, and covering accountability and participant roles, responsibilities, and authorities.

Stakeholder Analysis: Often completed as part of the situation assessment, a stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying the individuals or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by the proposed CMSP action. The analysis will often examine key relationships, interests, influences, and often suggest strategies for successfully engaging specific stakeholder groups at different stages of the CMSP process.

Stakeholder/Public Engagement Planning: Stakeholder and public engagement planning is a distinct task in the national and regional CMSP planning process that accounts for incorporating adequate engagement elements in the CMSP process. It is important that engagement planning occur early in the overall process, and that it is highly integrated with the schedule and milestones established in the CMSP plan. Engagement goals and objectives and performance measures should be established, and the engagement plan should be evaluated periodically. A map of the process with stakeholder and public engagement milestones is a tool that can be presented and discussed with the public.

Technology for Collaboration: Different technologies can be utilized to enhance and improve collaborative decision-making processes. The goal of these technologies is to increase the quality and integration of technical expertise and stakeholder knowledge, to present integrated data analyses, and to increase the inclusivity of the option generation and evaluation process. Web-based decision support tools that specialize in open and participatory marine spatial planning, such as MarineMap, may be helpful in gathering expertise from resource managers, scientists, stakeholder groups, and the public in CMSP efforts. Other collaborative technology tools that may be useful in CMSP are GIS tools, other visualization tools, data integration tools, technical models that are developed collaboratively, and web-based communication and outreach mechanisms.

Appendix B: Spectrum of Stakeholder and Public Involvement and Influence in CMSP

There is a broad range of potential stakeholder and public engagement strategies for CMSP. They include different activities, with different degrees of influence on the eventual decisions. In addition, the activities are often best utilized at different times throughout the process. The chart below summarizes these activities, their level of influence on the decision-making process, and the most appropriate phases of the process to apply those activities.

Spectrum of Stakeholder and Public Involvement and Influence in CMSP

	Explore/Inform	Consult	Decide	Implement
Outcomes	• Improved shared understanding of issues, process, perspectives, etc. • Lists of concerns • Information needs identified • Build Relationships	• Comments on draft planning products • Suggestions for approaches • Priority concerns, issues and topics • Discussion of options • Formation of a community of CMS planners and stakeholders	• Consensus-based agreements among the RPB, and with stakeholders	• Multi-party agreements to create and implement regional CMS plans
Parties Involved	• Regional Planning Bodies (Federal Agencies, States, Tribes, other groups) • Stakeholder Advisory Group • Interest Groups and stakeholders • Public	• Regional Planning Bodies (Federal Agencies, States, Tribes, other groups) • Stakeholder Advisory Group • Sub-regional stakeholder meetings • Interest Groups • Public • Scientists, Subject Matter Experts • Resource management bodies such as Fishery Mgt Councils	• Regional Planning Bodies (Agencies, Tribes, other groups) • Existing State, Federal, and Tribal Authorities • Stakeholders	• Regional Planning Bodies (States, Tribes) • Implementing Agencies • Stakeholder Advisory Group • Federal agencies • Fishery Management Councils
Tools/Techniques	• Websites • Educational Materials • Focus Groups • Conferences • Open houses • Dialogues • Forums • Listening sessions	• Interviews • Workshops • Visioning sessions • Public Hearings • Deliberative Dialogues • Comment Forms • Surveys • Public meetings • Roundtable discussions	• Facilitated Meetings • Consensus meetings • Mediated negotiations and dispute resolution	• Collaborative Planning processes • Partnerships for Action • Adaptive Management Teams • Implementation Committees
Use When	• Early in projects when issues are under development • Throughout the process, beginning in scoping phase, when broad education and support are needed	• When broad input is helpful • Throughout the project lifecycle • To test proposals from the planning process and solicit public and stakeholder ideas • To gather data and information	• To create regional CMS plans, or other regional decisions made by RPB or Implementing Agencies	• There is a need for meaningful partnerships to make and implement decisions • Creating and implementing CMS plans

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