



Delaware Ocean and Bay Plan

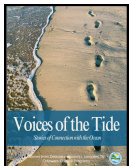
January 2026 Updates

2025 Year in Review

Research, preparations and planning for Delaware’s first Ocean and Bay Plan are steadily progressing. 2025 has been busy as we have continued with public engagement, data gathering, filling gaps, developing best practices for the activity guide, updates to the website, and planning for our next steps in 2026. We’re on track and working with partners to fill in additional data gaps, further develop the planning tool, and expand our public outreach.

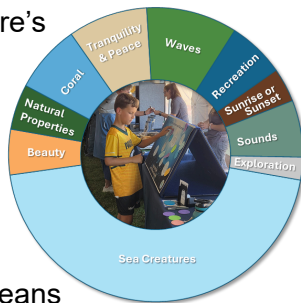


Public Engagement



During **Ocean Month** in June, DNREC invited Delawareans to share their ocean connection stories to celebrate the natural wonders of the ocean and honor our history. Submissions were brought together into a [Voices of the Tide](#) story catalog for viewing.

At the University of Delaware’s **Coast Day** this year we asked visitors to write down what they love about the ocean. While sea creatures were the most popular answer, you can see in this chart, there are many reasons Delawareans love our ocean!



Water refill stations funded by our partnership with [MARCO](#) (the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean) have been installed at the public restroom in Slaughter Beach, and Grove Park Canal in Rehoboth Beach. Each station received a sign thanking visitors for choosing a #HealthyRefill.

Learn why using refillable water bottles will protect wildlife, improve your health and save you money at [ReThinkYourDrink.org](#)



Plan Development

In July, the **Ocean and Bay Plan Activity Guide** was released, which describes the types of marine activities and wildlife that occur in different areas off our coast and at different times of the year.



Through discussions with resource experts, and a **gaps analysis** on ocean resource management data conducted by the University of Delaware, two data gaps have been identified to address next year.

1. Recreational shellfish data

In Delaware, recreational shellfish anglers target species such as lobster, hard clams, razor clams, blue crabs and potentially other crab species. However, recreational harvest data for these fisheries is currently unavailable.

2. Valuation of the marine environment

A healthy ocean is essential to human health, and Delawareans have consistently shared their deep connection to the sights and sounds of a thriving ocean - fostering a sense of peace, calm, and inner joy. Yet many of the benefits it provides, supporting personal well-being and quality of life, are not easily defined in economic terms.

2026 Priorities and Direction

WE'RE HIRING!

DNREC's Coastal Management Program will be moving forward with current initiatives and planned projects in 2026 to keep the development process moving forward for Delaware's first Ocean and Bay Plan. Below are some things to keep an eye out for this coming year!

Recreational Shellfish Survey

University of Delaware is assisting DNREC in developing a survey focused on shellfishing activity, to be sent out in early 2026. The information gathered will give managers a clearer picture of how shellfish resources are used and will support informed decisions about sustainable harvest levels to balance the use of marine species.

Be on the lookout if you are a licensed angler. Your participation will provide you with a chance to win a prize!



Delaware Coastal Management Program is looking to hire a part-time **Ocean Planning Outreach Coordinator**.

If you have a passion for connecting people to coastal and ocean environments, strong interpersonal skills, and graphic design experience, we would love for you to apply!

The application and additional details can be found at: [Ocean Planning Outreach Coordinator](#)

Application deadline is: **January 28, 2026**

Marine Valuation Roadmap

The DNREC Coastal Management Program will be working with the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center to develop a strategy to better understand the value of the indirect benefit values the marine environment provides to humans.



After the roadmap is developed, funding will be secured, as available, to answer the research questions identified in the strategy. By measuring how the ocean shapes our everyday experiences, we can transform invisible benefits into clear, actionable insights for policy, planning, and resource management.

Ocean and Bay Planning Tool

Work is already underway to compile the information needed for this project. The planning tool will provide a framework that describes the relationships between the various activities and resources occurring off Delaware's coast and will identify suggested practices to minimize conflict. The collected information will be input into a database that will populate the reports for the finalized GIS-based Ocean and Bay Planning Tool.



Help Track Our Coasts with the MyCoast App!

The [Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean](#) (MARCO) is a partnership among the states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia working together to protect and improve the health of our shared ocean and coastal resources.

Using the MyCoast app, MARCO is collecting photos and reports to better understand how people and wildlife interact with our coastline. This information helps coastal decision makers, emergency managers, and others to better understand our changing coasts, respond to emerging challenges, and protect coastal resources.

You can submit two types of reports: wildlife sightings (where and when you spot marine life) and recreation (activities you enjoy along the coast). Reporting is easy and takes just a few minutes!

MARCO and MyCoast will NOT collect your personal information.

Download the MyCoast app or visit the website at: mycoast.org/marco