



# Delaware Ocean and Bay Plan

## July 2025 Updates

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) is continuing its work to develop an Ocean and Bay Plan to protect Delaware's marine resources, ecological functions and ocean and bay uses.

### Elements of the Ocean and Bay Plan Effort

DNREC's ocean and bay planning effort will identify responsible management and stewardship practices applicable to the use and conservation of marine resources off Delaware's coast.

This will result in three core components: a Delaware Ocean and Bay Activity Guide (previously referenced as a Resource and Use Guide), an Ocean and Bay Planning Tool, and the Delaware Ocean and Bay Plan. Each component will be a comprehensive, easy to use resource for decision makers and stakeholders.

Public input and review by stakeholders and residents will be incorporated throughout the ocean and bay planning effort.



#### Delaware Ocean and Bay Activity Guide

**new!** This describes the types of marine activities and wildlife that occur in different areas off our coast and at different times of the year.



#### Ocean and Bay Planning Tool

A visual platform to explore the activities and resources off Delaware's coast along with best practices for minimizing conflict.

#### Ocean and Bay Plan

A reference document for existing and potential new ocean and bay users. It will:

- Describe the impacts of each water-dependent human activity on other uses and identified resources
- Provide recommendations for best practices for balancing ocean and bay activities with the conservation of marine resources through spatial planning
- Explore how climate change has impacted and will continue to impact ocean and bay resources and uses
- Identify gaps and needs to support ocean and bay resource management

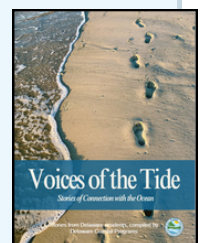
To learn more about the components of the ocean and bay planning effort, visit: [de.gov/obp](https://de.gov/obp)

### National Ocean Month

Celebrated annually in June, [National Ocean Month](#) provides us with a dedicated time to recognize the vital role the ocean plays in our environment, our culture, and our personal lives.

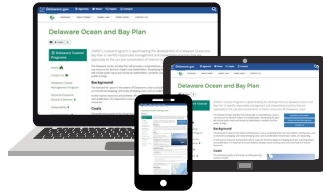
This year, to honor the ways Delawareans experience the ocean, DNREC explored personal stories of connection through a public engagement campaign titled: [Voices of the Tide: Stories of Connection with the Ocean](#). The stories and photos were compiled into a thematic booklet that can be viewed by all, and will also help in identifying marine resources and activities that can be addressed in the Ocean and Bay Plan.

Visit Delaware's [Ocean Month](#) webpage to learn more!



## Website Updates

The Delaware Ocean and Bay Plan webpage has been updated to highlight the progress made in the Ocean and Bay planning effort.



Updates include summaries of our extensive background research, engagement with over 50 external organizations and experts, input gathered during public listening sessions, and the new Ocean and Bay Activity Guide.

Explore the website at: [de.gov/obp](https://de.gov/obp)

## Mark Your Calendar



Aug. 14: Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal Training | Dover  
[Learn More](#)

Sept. 13: Delaware Coastal Cleanup Event  
[Learn More](#)

Nov. 12-13: MARCO Marine Debris Summit | Dewey Beach  
[Learn More](#)

## Marine Life May be Closer Than You Think!

In 2024, a [North Atlantic right whale](#) was spotted about 200 yards off the coast of Dewey Beach. These endangered ocean mammals are found primarily in Atlantic coastal waters near the continental shelf, but can be seen closer to shore. The 2024 sighting was rare (there are only around 370 whales remaining), but does highlight that many marine species may be found in areas of human activity - closer than we think!

To read more about the 2024 sighting, check out this [article](#).



## Report Coastal Wildlife Sightings Using MyCoast App



Help protect and monitor wildlife along the Mid-Atlantic coast by reporting your sightings through MARCO's [MyCoast](#) platform. Whether it's dolphins, seals, sea turtles, or other coastal species, your observations contribute to a better understanding of where and when wildlife are present. Submitting a report is quick and easy, and it supports efforts to enhance marine conservation and safety across the region. Share what you see and be part of protecting our coastal environment!

## Ocean Planning at Work



Ocean planning helps balance the many uses of ocean space, such as shipping, recreation, and habitat protection - ensuring these activities can coexist safely and sustainably. A great example of this comes from the U.S. Coast Guard's use of real-time Automatic Identification System (AIS) vessel-traffic data, available through the [Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal](#). This data helps the Coast Guard visualize shipping routes, identify high-traffic areas, and highlight potential conflicts with other uses such as reef habitats and anchorages. This information is critical in developing safe navigation strategies and improving maritime safety across the region.

Read the full article at: [Real-time tracking helps solve conflicts between vessels and other maritime activities](#)

**The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal** is a great tool for planners, scientists, and teachers. Want to learn more? DNREC Coastal Programs will be hosting a free, interactive training in Dover on **August 14 from 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.** Join us to learn how to use the portal's tools to identify and map over 6,000 uses and features of the ocean and the Delaware Bay! [Learn More](#)

## Moving Forward



The next steps for Delaware's Ocean and Bay Plan effort involve developing the Ocean and Bay Planning Tool, identifying and completing research to fill in information gaps and finalizing the draft of the plan itself. Planned listserv updates will be sent out bi-annually and as new information becomes available.

To view Ocean and Bay Plan progress and information, visit [de.gov/obp](https://de.gov/obp).