California Ocean Uses Atlas Project

A Public-Private Partnership between NOAA's MPA Center and Marine Conservation Biology Institute

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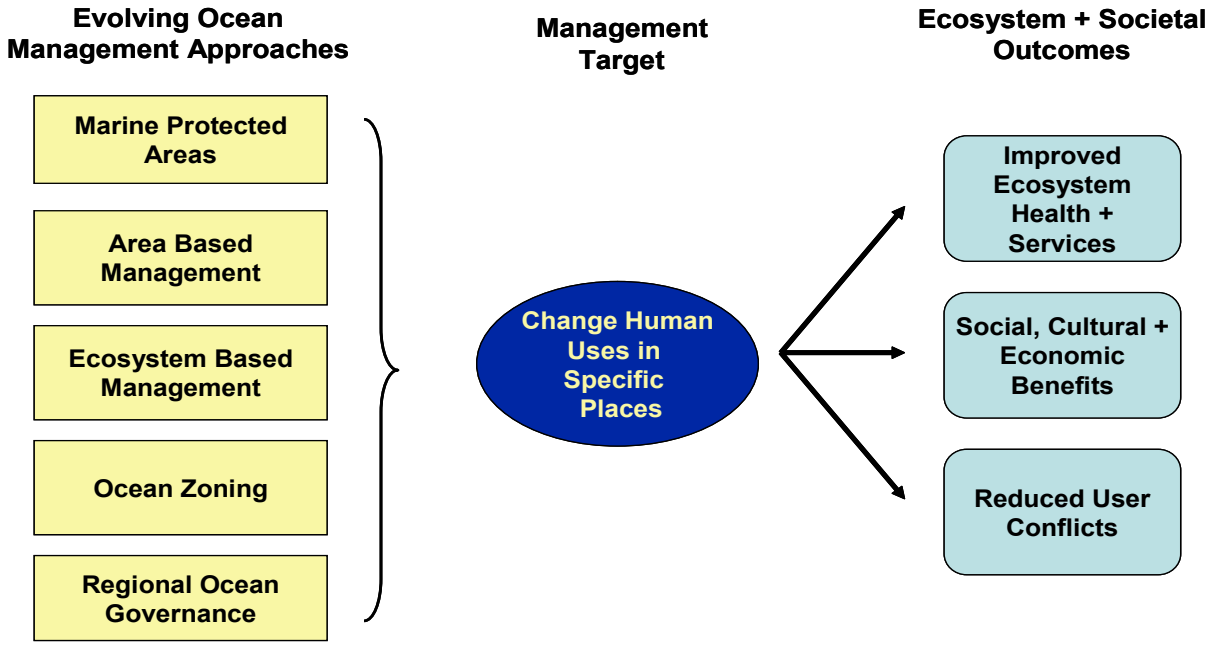
The **California Ocean Uses Atlas** is an innovative public-private partnership between NOAA's Marine Protected Areas Center (MPA Center) and Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI). Funded by grants from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Resources Legacy Fund, the Atlas project fills a critical information gap in ocean management by mapping, for the first time, the full range of significant human uses of the ocean in state and federal waters off the coast of California. Maps of ocean uses will be created by regional experts through participatory GIS workshops in four regions throughout the state. Data, maps and analytical products will be made available to state and federal agencies and to all interested parties.

Why Now, Why California?

Faced with increasing pressures from a growing variety of ocean uses, California, Oregon and Washington are actively pursuing innovative, integrated approaches to conserving the California Current Ecosystem and the ecological services it provides. These rapidly growing, evolving initiatives include new marine protected area networks, ecosystem-based management, marine spatial planning, ocean zoning and regional ocean governance. While differing in scale and emphasis, all focus fundamentally on managing patterns of human use within specific areas in the hopes of achieving certain ecological and/or societal objectives.



Notable recent advances have occurred in building tools, strategies and support for regional ocean conservation, especially on the west coast. Still missing from this picture, however, is robust information about the main driver of ecosystem health and services: human use patterns. Without better and more comprehensive data on patterns and significance of ocean uses, our ability to effectively design, justify and evaluate place-based marine management measures will continue to be compromised.

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NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center's mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments and stakeholders to develop a science-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. These collaborative efforts will lead to a more efficient, effective use of MPAs now and in the future to conserve and sustain the nation's vital marine resources.

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Like most places, California lacks comprehensive data reflecting the full range of human uses of the ocean. Instead, we know a little about a few, typically extractive, uses in a few places (e.g. commercial and recreational fishing). Our practical knowledge of how, when, and where people use California's ocean remains the most poorly understood and imperfectly applied piece of the ocean management puzzle. The need for better data on human use patterns was highlighted recently as a high priority by the California, Washington and Oregon Tri-State Governor's agreement.

What Will Be Produced?

The Atlas Project will produce three related outputs between January 2008 and September 2009:

- ***Regional Maps of Ocean Uses*** - Drawing upon the experience and knowledge of regional experts in ocean use and management throughout the state, the project will develop and provide to ocean managers and the interested public comprehensive GIS maps and analytical products reflecting the variety of ocean uses in state and federal waters in regions used by California's Marine Life Protection Act Initiative (MLPAI).

- ***Sustainability Plan for Long-Term Mapping of Changes in Ocean Uses*** - Working with a variety of federal and state agencies, including the MLPAI's new Monitoring Enterprise, the Atlas project will develop plans to ensure the sustainable collection and management of ocean use data as part of a broader ocean monitoring effort in California.

- ***Design Criteria for Online Mapping Tool*** - Working with federal and state agencies and private organizations in California, the Atlas project will convene an expert workshop to develop design criteria for a web-based mapping tool that will allow individual users and stakeholders to participate directly and easily in planning for managing ocean uses.

How Will the Products be Disseminated and Used?

The California Ocean Uses Atlas Project was designed specifically to inform ongoing management and policy decisions among federal and state agencies responsible for ocean ecosystems in California. Potential applications and clients of Atlas products include the MLPAI, federal MPA initiatives, fisheries management actions, ocean energy siting, and regional ocean governance. To this end, all data and products will be delivered to key agencies as they are completed and will be made available to any interested parties via various publicly accessible web sites.

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