

About the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a federal agency focused on the condition of the oceans and the atmosphere. Its mission is “to understand and predict changes in Earth’s environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our nation’s economic, social, and environmental needs.” It plays several distinct roles within the Department of Commerce:



Supplier of Environmental Information Products and Steward of the Environment. NOAA supplies information to its customers pertaining to the state of the oceans and the atmosphere. This is clearly manifested in the production of weather warnings and forecasts through the National Weather Service, but NOAA’s information products extend to climate, ecosystems, and commerce as well. As the steward of national coastal and marine environments, NOAA coordinates with federal, state, local, tribal, and international authorities to manage the use of these environments, regulating fisheries and marine sanctuaries as well as protecting threatened and endangered marine species.

Leader in Applied Scientific Research. NOAA is a trusted source of accurate and objective scientific information in four areas of national and global importance:

- **Ecosystems:** Ensuring the sustainable use of resources and balancing competing uses of coastal and marine ecosystems, recognizing both human and natural components
- **Climate:** Understanding changes in climate, including the El Niño phenomenon, to ensure that communities across the nation can plan and respond accordingly
- **Weather and Water:** Providing data and forecasts for weather- and water-cycle events
- **Commerce and Transportation:** Supporting the nation’s commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound air, marine, and surface transportation

Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IOCM) is an important objective for NOAA and includes all current and prospective NOAA program interests in mapping of coastal, ocean, benthic, and water-column attributes. These attributes—the open ocean, Exclusive Economic Zone, and continental shelf—extend as far inland as necessary and include coastal and Great Lakes state waters and coastal zones.

NOAA maps and charts the oceans and coasts for many reasons, including navigation, ocean exploration, coastal and living resource management, hazards preparedness, response and mitigation, and habitat assessments. Many NOAA activities also use mapping data to support tsunami modeling, storm surge planning, coastal erosion, habitat restoration, and climate and sea-level rise models.

Given that no one program has the resources to achieve even a small percentage of its mapping needs, NOAA’s IOCM goals are to strengthen partnerships for increased efficiency, consistency, and cost-effectiveness and to eliminate duplication in its ocean and coastal mapping activities. Coordinating federal mapping efforts, leveraging resources, and facilitating the dissemination of mapping products aids NOAA in meeting its mission requirements, thereby supporting commerce with information that is critical for safe maritime transportation and for understanding and wisely managing NOAA-trust resources.