

Ecosystem-Based Management

Objective

Adopt ecosystem-based management as a foundational principle for the comprehensive management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

Why Do This?

Traditional management of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resource uses focuses on single sector management (i.e., single species or activity type) and does not adequately consider the whole ecosystem. This may result in the loss of resources, economic hardship, and environmental risk. Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is an integrated approach to resource management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans, and the natural elements that are integral to ecosystem functions. EBM is informed by science to conserve and protect our cultural and natural heritage by sustaining diverse, productive, resilient ecosystems and the services they provide, thereby promoting the long-term health, security, and well-being of our Nation. EBM will enable decision-makers to incorporate the cumulative effects of multiple activities on entire ecosystems, and identify approaches for assessing trade-offs among these activities with the goal of maintaining ecosystem health and services.

Potential Actions and Expected Outcomes

- **Establish Ecosystem-based Management Leadership and Collaboration** – Federal agencies will work with State, tribal, and local authorities and regional governance entities to apply successful EBM approaches in the areas of greatest need. This will lead to a more efficient and effective management of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes by promoting a common understanding and implementation of the EBM approach.
- **Establish an Interagency Ecosystem-based Management Science Framework** – A nationwide interdisciplinary and integrated science-based framework will improve our understanding of ecosystem functions and how the interactions between and within human and natural systems affect ecosystem health and services. It will leverage, integrate, and coordinate existing scientific programs and observations, monitoring, and research capabilities, and identify future scientific needs to understand changes over time.
- **Inform Decision-making to Support Ecosystem-based Management** – Products, services, and communication tools will be developed and provided to support EBM. This will enable agencies to share and discuss ecological, economic, social, physical, and other types of data and information needed to facilitate EBM and adaptive management approaches.
- **Incorporate Ecosystem-based Management Principles into Existing Policy and Governance** – Legislative and regulatory roadblocks to implementing EBM will be identified. EBM principles will be incorporated into Federal, regional, State, territorial, tribal, and local project planning and environmental review processes to support rapid and effective implementation of EBM throughout our Nation's marine and coastal ecosystems. This will enhance ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stewardship, rather than a fragmented process that only looks at individual components of or influences on an ecosystem.