NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT

A framework to improve habitat for fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities

Council Coordinating Committee Meeting
January 26, 2012

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NOAA Habitat Blueprint Overview

- ***NOAA's Objective—***
  Healthy habitats that sustain resilient and thriving marine resources and communities

- **We protect and restore habitat for:**
  - Sustainable and productive fisheries
  - Threatened and endangered species
  - At-risk habitats, including corals, shellfish, and wetlands
  - Resilient coastal communities and economies

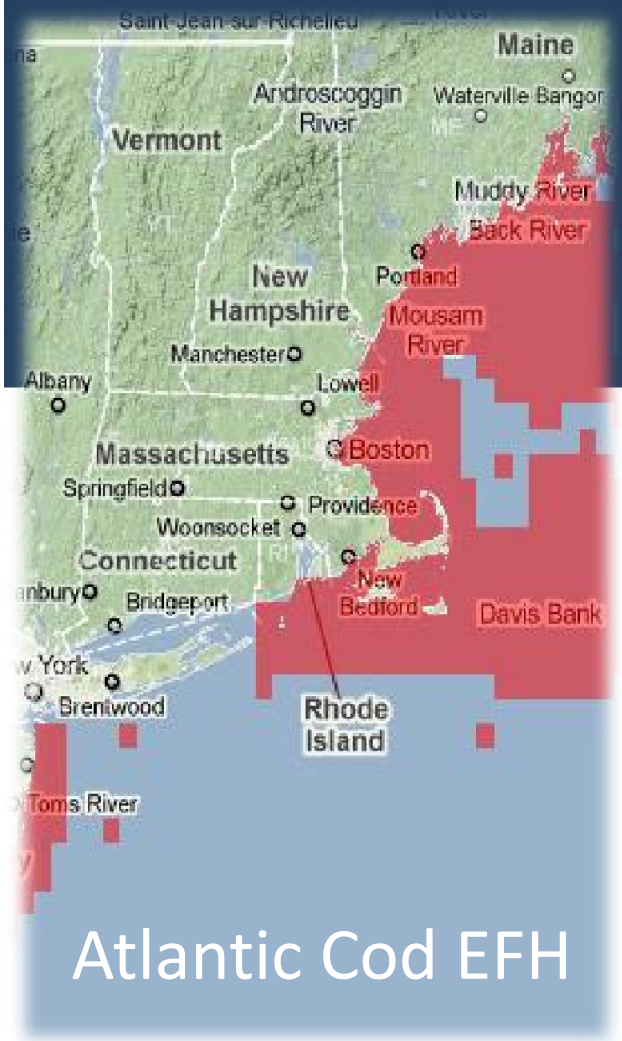
Why is the Blueprint Needed?

- Widespread habitat loss and degradation
  - **111,000 acres of estuarine wetlands lost between 2004-2007**
- Random acts of kindness aren't effective
- Lack of coordination
- Limited resources

Blueprint = Improving Our Numbers

- **Fish stock #s for FY10:**
  - 48 fishery stocks (23%) overfished
  - 40 stocks (16%) subject to overfishing
  - 54 rebuilding plans in place
- **Of ~ 300 protected species:**
  - 82 ESA-listed species
  - 93 candidate ESA species
  - 9 proposed species for listing
  - 38 species of concern
  - 117 marine mammals under MMPA

MSA & Essential Fish Habitat



Eggs

Larvae

Juveniles

Adults

- >3,000 EFH consultations per year
- Under MSA, can we better target our limited resources to combat non-fishing impacts to fisheries habitat?

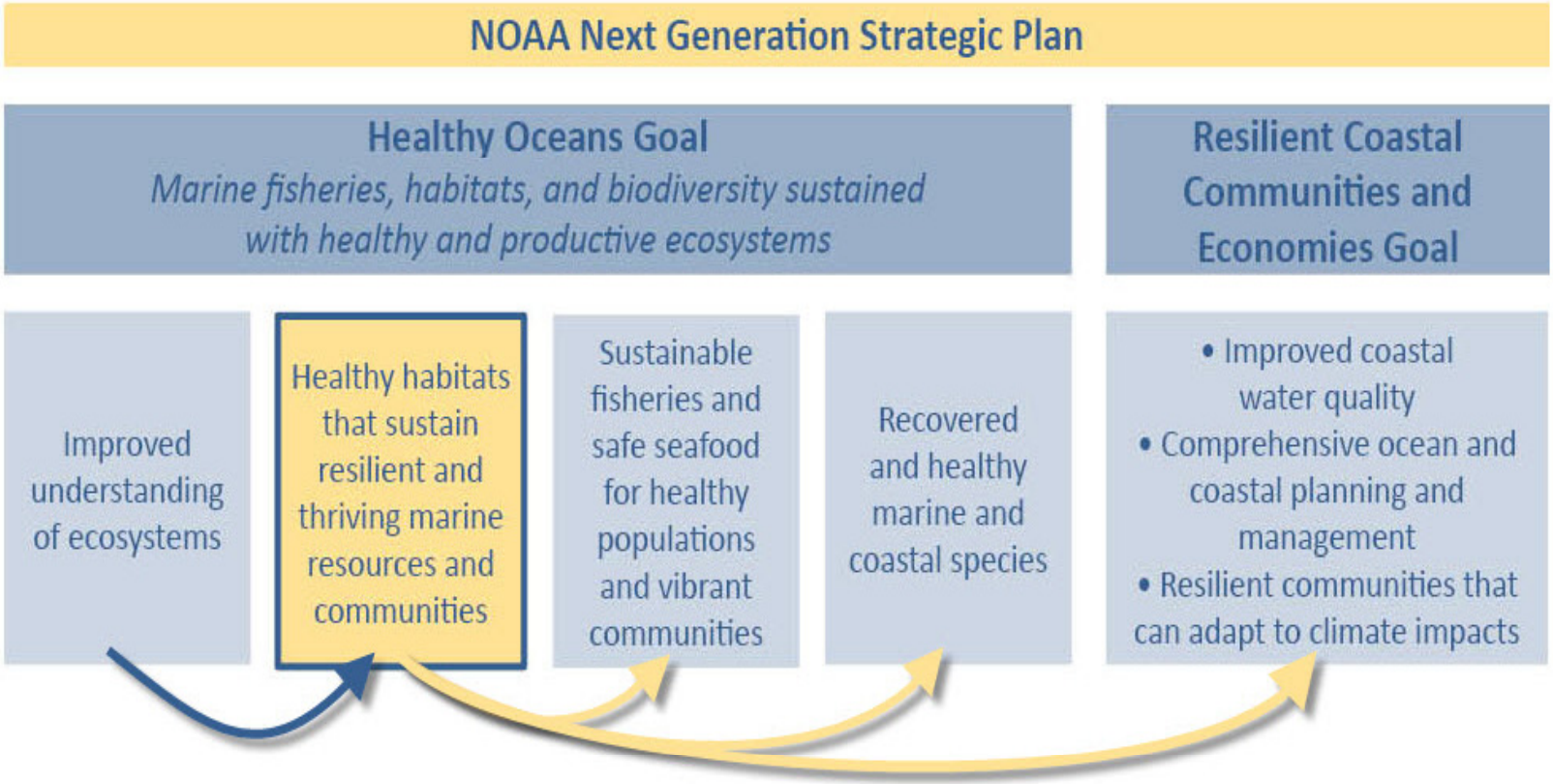
WHAT IS THE NOAA HABITAT BLUEPRINT?

- We will **think & act strategically across programs** and with partner organizations
- We will **increase the effectiveness of our efforts** to improve habitat conditions for fisheries, marine life, and coastal communities

What is the NOAA Habitat Blueprint?

- **Make decisions in broader ecosystem context** and consider competing priorities
- **Leverage partnerships** to better execute our authorities, tools, and capabilities

THIS IS NOT ANOTHER STRATEGIC PLAN

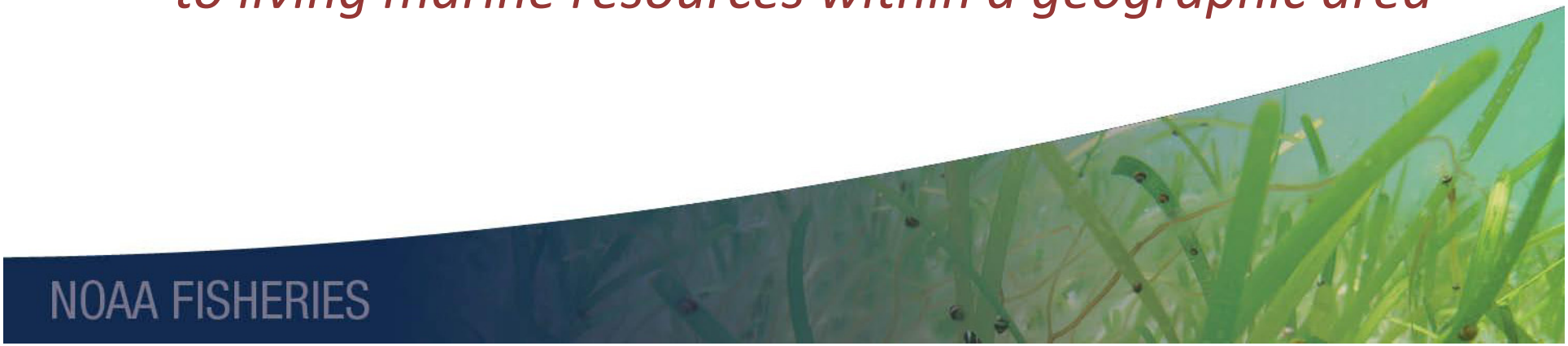


Four Key Approaches

1) Implement
   Regional Habitat Initiatives
2) Establish
   Geographic Priorities
3) Implement a Systematic and Strategic Approach to
   Habitat Science
4) Strengthen
   Policy and Legislation

Habitat Blueprint Regional Initiatives

To preserve or improve habitat conditions to address specific challenges to living marine resources within a geographic area



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1: Regional Habitat Initiatives

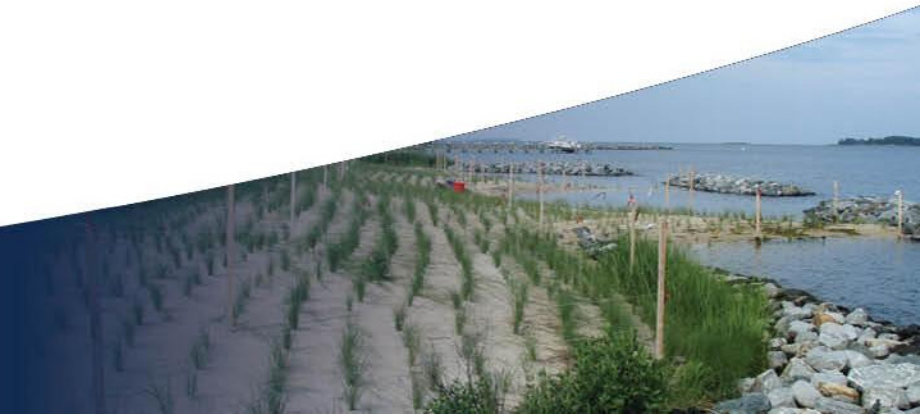
- **Alaska**—Cook Inlet
- **Northwest**—Puget Sound
- **Pacific Islands**—Guam
- **Southwest**—Southern California Bight

1: Regional Habitat Initiatives

- **Southeast**—Charleston Harbor
- **Northeast**—Northwest Atlantic Deep-Sea Corals
- **Chesapeake Bay**—Harris Creek Oyster Restoration

1: Regional Habitat Initiatives

- **Share "lessons learned"** from regional initiatives as well as other projects and initiatives to **promote Blueprint principles**



Establish Geographic Priorities to Focus Habitat Conservation

Focus expertise, resources, and actions

<u>in targeted areas</u>

to maximize benefits to marine resources

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2: Establish Geographic Priorities

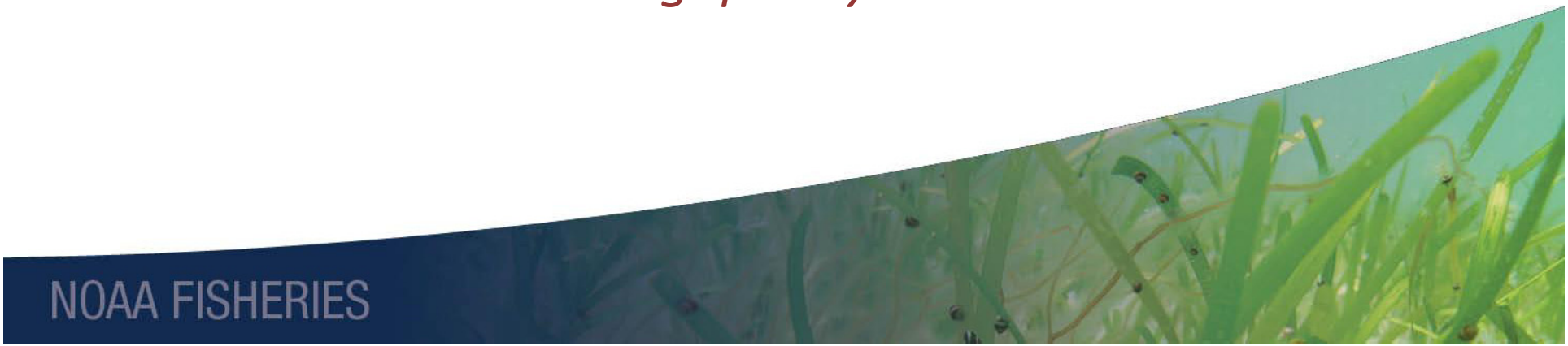
- **Identify priority areas** based on convergence of important habitats for priority species
- **Define habitat conditions** considering species needs and other goals
- **Implement habitat-based solutions** using all available programs, authorities, partnerships, and tools

2: Establish Geographic Priorities

- **Identify criteria and process** for selecting geographic areas
  - Federally managed fish
  - Protected species
  - Habitats at risk
  - Communities
- **Engage internal NOAA** and external stakeholders
- **Convene workshop in each region** to select geographic area

Implement a Systematic & Strategic Approach to Habitat Science

Prioritize our science &
use a more <u>integrative approach</u> for planning
& conducting quality habitat science



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3: Strategic Approach to Habitat Science

- **Prioritize science activities** to fulfill habitat needs
- **Integrate science with management** actions to foster better decisions
- **Improve delivery** of habitat science
- **Increase implementation of HAIP**

Strengthen Policy & Legislation to Enhance Habitat Conservation

Remove barriers & seize opportunities to improve our policies, regulations, and legal authorities

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4: Policy & Guidance—Short Term

- **Revise the NOAA Fisheries Habitat Conservation Policy** to institutionalize the Blueprint
  - *e.g., Habitat Impacts in Decision Memos/Issue Advisories*
- Investigate methods to **prioritize and improve effectiveness of consultations**
- **Engage Councils, MAFAC, and stakeholders** for input

4: Improvements to Authorities—Long Term

- Explore how we can **better apply existing authorities** (MSA, ESA)
  - *use Managing our Nation's Fisheries III and other workshops*
- Evaluate need for a **stronger/ improved legislative mandate** for habitat conservation
- **Explore new habitat policy innovations** (Blue carbon, sediment/ nutrient reduction)

CCC Discussion

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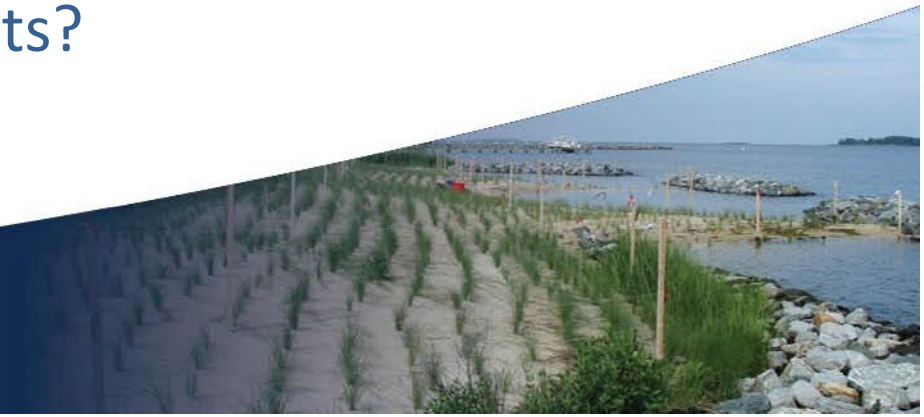
CCC Input/Council role

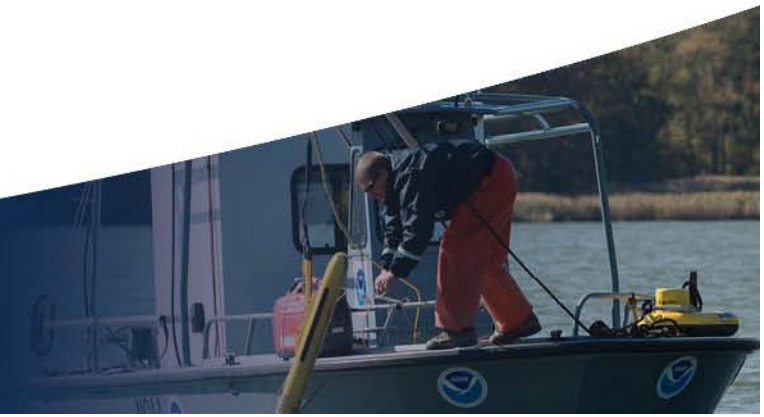
- Coordination with Regional Habitat Initiatives
- Potential criteria for selecting geographic priority areas
- Policy/regulatory improvement ideas to conserve habitat
  - How best to address non-fishing impacts?



For More Information

Visit:

www.habitat.noaa.gov/blueprint



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