

NEWS

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MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING (MSP) PIONEER APPLAUDS PRESIDENT OBAMA'S DECISION TO INTEGRATE CONSERVATION AND USERS' INTERESTS IN NEW NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY

Washington DC: Marine Conservation Biology Institute President Elliott Norse, who played a key role in bringing the idea of marine spatial planning (MSP) to the United States, praised President Barack Obama for making ecosystem-based MSP central to implementing our National Ocean Policy. The White House released the MSP framework today for comments.

MSP is a strategic way to conserve marine ecosystems and sustainable economic uses of our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes. It allows government agencies to protect, recover and maintain ecologically crucial areas and to separate incompatible human uses, such as bottom trawling and trap fishing, or wind farms and parasailing. According to the National Ocean Economics Program, the US ocean economy contributes more than \$180 billion annually to the nation's GDP just from living resources, tourism and recreation.

“This is the biggest ocean management news in our nation’s history,” said Dr. Norse. “It recognizes that clean, diverse and productive oceans, ocean-related jobs, marine recreation and national security are all essential policy goals for America. It ensures that sea kayakers, fishermen, whale watchers, energy developers, commercial shippers, scuba divers and coastal communities will have healthy, life-filled oceans now and in the future.”

Dr. Norse began working on MSP in 1992 when he visited Australia’s Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the world’s first very large ocean area partitioned to benefit the diverse but sometimes incompatible concerns of users and conservationists. Since then, his books and papers have been crucial to bringing marine spatial planning to the USA.

“The framework that the Obama Administration released today is bold, visionary and essential to the future of America,” said MCBI President Dr. Elliott A. Norse, who in 1993 was lead author of *Global Marine Biological Diversity: A Strategy for Building Conservation into Decision Making*.

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This book, now the most-cited book in marine conservation worldwide, examined threats to the oceans and how nations such as Australia were working to protect their oceans' ecology and economy. "The USA has to get past the old 'protect oceans versus use oceans' arguments. We've got to do both," he said.

Vietnam, Norway, United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany are among the other nations that have led in developing and using this powerful new ocean governance method. Now this will begin happening throughout US waters.

"We need to do ecosystem-based marine spatial planning because our oceans are in trouble," Dr. Norse said. "Healthy living oceans are essential for America. Now, for the first time, our country is making healthy, living oceans a high national priority. With marine spatial planning, conservationists and ocean users both win big," said Dr. Norse, who began his career in marine conservation at the US Environmental Protection Agency in 1978 after receiving his doctorate in marine ecology. He later worked for President Jimmy Carter at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, was President of the Society for Conservation Biology's Marine Section, and is a Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation. "Conservationists will see more areas protected, and users will have far greater certainty, which benefits them economically," he said.

Comprehensive, ecosystem-based marine spatial planning is a critical way that the USA will protect, recover and maintain healthy, productive oceans while encouraging uses compatible with ocean health. "I'm thrilled that the Obama Administration's National Ocean Policy says, first and foremost, conserving the oceans' biological diversity, integrity and resilience are the foundation for sound and compatible economic uses," Dr. Norse said.

Marine Conservation Biology Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the science of marine conservation biology and securing protection for the world's marine ecosystems. Founded in 1996, MCBI is headquartered in Bellevue WA, and has offices in Honolulu HI, Glen Ellen CA and Washington DC.

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