

Getting business on board: Engaging the business community in ocean planning

According to figures from the World Ocean Council, an ocean industry alliance focused on sustainable development, maritime industry accounts for a remarkable amount of global economic activity. More than 50 thousand merchant vessels deliver 90% of international trade. Offshore energy sources supply 30% of oil and natural gas. More than one million kilometers of submarine cables carry 98% of international communications. Roughly 1.3 million vessels work the world's fisheries.

Yet despite this vast industrial use of the oceans, ocean planning processes are often dominated by government agencies, NGOs, and academics with relatively little involvement by industry. In some cases this is by industry default, such as due to a lack of understanding of the MSP movement or its utility; in others it is because planners have not engaged industry effectively (see the box "[Barriers to industry involvement in MSP](#)" at the end of this article).

The potential benefits of ocean planning for industry can be substantial. This was shown, for example, by a study that assessed potential conflicts among offshore wind energy, commercial fishing, and whale-watching sectors in the US state of Massachusetts. The researchers estimated that using marine spatial planning rather than conventional sectoral planning could prevent more than US \$1 million in losses to the fishery and whale-watching sectors while generating more than \$10 million in extra value to the energy sector. (These figures would accrue over 27 years - see MEAM 5:5, "[Analyzing tradeoffs of ecosystem services in Massachusetts Bay](#)"). Constructive engagement of industry in marine planning processes - and the support of ocean businesses for the end results of those processes - increases the likelihood of marine spatial plans being implemented and achieving widespread compliance.

In this issue of MEAM, we learned from a variety of experts what ocean planning practitioners should (and should not) do to get the ocean business community actively and productively engaged in ocean planning processes.

A. Convey the costs of conflict and degradation in business-related terms

Editor's note: Jorge Jiménez is director general of the MarViva Foundation, a regional, non-profit organization that promotes the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems in the Eastern Tropical Pacific (www.marviva.net). MarViva's work focuses on sustainable markets as well as marine spatial planning.

MEAM: What advice do you have for ocean planning practitioners who are getting started on engaging the ocean business community?

Jorge Jiménez: Every business sector is different and operates in specific contexts. Despite the differences, no business sector can grow indefinitely in a degraded environment. At the same time, in the face of economic activity, no healthy environment can be maintained without the commitment of a responsible business community.

Engagement of ocean businesses in multi-sectoral marine planning needs to derive from a previous analysis of the stakeholders as a whole, including their relative interests and their preliminary positions with regards to potential management of traditional private and economic activities. A powerful opposing sector might represent a disruptive force in an incipient planning process. On the other hand, a powerful corporate sector, convinced of the advantages of such processes, might be a pivotal catalyst and advisor to enable its advancement.

Early development of information and awareness of the magnitude of the conflicts faced by the ocean businesses given the lack of planning is key to building the required confidence and persuading the sector to get involved. Joint development of preliminary alternatives to reduce or eliminate conflict is also critical. The implementation of planning measures (use regulations, zoning schemes, among others) might be considered an interference by the business sector. Nonetheless, if designed as a result of a collaborative process in the context of conflict resolution and with the corresponding cost-benefit analysis, it can convince the business sector and gain from its inputs and know-how.

Planning and managing the marine space means maximizing the benefits to all stakeholders while minimizing the impact to the environment. One position that needs to be established at the onset is that the ocean belongs to all and therefore we need to agree on how to use it sustainably. If business sectors realize that other users have legitimate interests in some areas or resources, and potentially crossing those stakeholders might represent a lengthy and expensive process, it will be easier to reach agreements.

MEAM: Are there some mistakes to avoid?

Jiménez: The business community talks about efficiency and profit. We need to talk to them in the same language. Approaching the corporate sectors with ecological arguments is a mistake. We need to talk about costs and benefits. Ocean planning benefits businesses and their sustainability. Ocean planning must encompass comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the activities, including the proper selection of sites and methods by which the business sector can secure long term operations. For many sectors, maximizing short-term benefits is ecologically unsustainable, although some elements in the private sector might favor that approach. To inform those doing this, it is necessary to convey, in business-related terms, the implications of an escalating high-level conflict (among human uses or among uses and the environment) and the impact of that conflict/degradation on their future performance and results.

Approaching business sectors without community and government stakeholders is also a mistake. Business people need to understand from the start of the process that there is increasing need and interest in the ocean planning process and that we are calling their attention as essential participants in it.

MEAM: Do you have examples of ocean planning processes that have done a particularly good job of engaging ocean businesses?

Jiménez: One noteworthy experience has been the zoning of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (<http://bit.ly/Stellwagenzoning>). The navigation sector collaborated in the process and abides by the resulting regulations. Several factors were fundamental to this achievement: 1) the existence of detailed information, not only of navigation routes, ship velocities, and use intensity, but also whale aggregations and distribution; 2) extensive public engagement in the process, with strong public support from awareness campaigns; 3) the existence of a strong governance structure for the area that commanded respect and had the influence to change the existing scenario. So far, the effective cases have involved only one to three sectors. Truly multi-sectoral planning is still very limited.

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B. Avoid going to battle with businesses

Editor's note: Linda Sams is the head of sustainability and fish health at Tassal Group Limited, Australia's largest producer of aquaculture salmon and one of the largest employers in Tasmania, Australia (www.tassal.com.au). Tassal has been actively involved in marine and coastal planning processes, including spatial zoning, at both the Australian state and federal levels.

MEAM: What advice do you have for ocean planning practitioners getting started on engaging the ocean business community?

Linda Sams: First of all, planners should learn about the businesses they want to engage. Planners should meet with businesses individually and ask them to discuss their strategic direction, risk profile, and planning tools. Planners should also develop an understanding of the main drivers for these businesses and how ocean planning may impact their development decisions and opportunities and constraints for growth.

Second, planners should provide businesses with the background information they need such as relevant legislation, agency and department dynamics, organizational charts, and ocean usage information - e.g., shipping lanes, recreational and commercial fishing areas, high value habitat. Planners should also come to the table with clarity of purpose and direction, a strategic plan, action items, targets, and clear deadlines and responsibilities. The sweet spot for businesses (and everyone else) is a process that neither fast tracks predetermined outcomes nor drags on forever.

Third, planners should carefully consider who they engage and when. They should bring moderate environmental NGOs and businesses to the table first to model outcomes and benefits. More radical/polarized participants should also have a voice and be able to bring their position to the table in the process. But the process should be steered with participants that bring a collaborative mindset to the table.

Other strategies/things to keep in mind:

- Try pairing a business with a conservationist or scientist to allow them to learn each other's perspective and language before they enter into the planning process. They can co-mentor each other so the different perspectives are understood.
- Bring economic development departments into the conversation with business. Align the process with economic goals and be creative about how business can benefit from being at the table.
- Always give businesses public credit for the compromises they make. Businesses risk their reputation when making compromises, and they should benefit (socially and reputationally) for the positive steps they take.
- Be very transparent about motives and politics throughout the process. This will invite criticism, but in the end it will be worth it.

MEAM: Any mistakes to avoid?

Sams: Yes, definitely some of those, too. First, avoid consulting with business as an afterthought. Businesses should be brought in the formative stages of planning and should be part of determining outcomes. When businesses aren't backed into a corner, collaborative solutions can be achieved.

Second, planners should avoid a negative mindset about businesses and assuming they will have to do "battle" with them. Large and small business holdings are an important and legitimate part of the cultural framework of the coastal and marine environment. Planners should first assume that businesses will want to minimize their impact and protect their image and that they do want to be engaged in conservation programs.

Third, planners should understand commercial sensitivities. Do not ask competitors for a marine space to sit in a room together and show all their cards in relation to development - it is not going to happen.

And, last, a common mistake is not building in enough time to change commercial situations to allow for a different use of the marine space. Business will need years, not months, to adapt to major changes.

MEAM: Any challenges and benefits of participating in ocean planning processes that are unique to businesses?

Sams: For businesses, successful ocean planning processes can reduce risk of changing regulatory environments and help "future proof" the business by increasing certainty of development and/or operations in areas that are recognized as suited to the business. This supports long-term planning.

Conversely, planned, ongoing, stalled, or failed ocean planning processes are a challenge for business because they can be perceived as blockages for growth and development, thereby impacting shareholder value and commerce.

Another benefit of working in these processes is furthering the corporate social responsibility evolution of a business. By participating in these processes, businesses gain a better understanding how they can contribute to a healthy future for the ocean and grow as a business in a new economy that values responsible development.

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C. Engage the ocean business community in designing the planning process itself

Editor's note: Paul Holthus is founding CEO and president of the World Ocean Council, an industry leadership alliance for corporate ocean responsibility (www.oceancouncil.org). A key area of effort for the World Ocean Council is encouraging and facilitating proactive, constructive industry involvement in MSP. It is working with the business community to develop understanding of MSP and the associated issues, stakeholders, and process.

MEAM: Any advice for ocean planning practitioners getting started on engaging the ocean business community?

Paul Holthus: Build relationships with the ocean business community by developing common ground around the need and opportunity to improve the relevant data and science. Create a process to identify data needs and build a cooperative process for stakeholders to gather and share data and support independent science in agreed-upon priority areas. If ocean planning is to move forward, ensure that there is a solid rationale for the planning. It should be based on good data and science that have informed good risk assessment and an evaluation of the costs and benefits of the planning.

MEAM: What mistakes should be avoided?

Holthus: Much of the ocean planning to date has been through a process wholly, or largely, developed without input from the business community. Industries are then approached to provide input to a system and process that they often had not heard about previously and had no input in developing. Rather than coming to the business

community to seek involvement in planning through a process that has not considered all stakeholders when it was developed, a better approach is to engage the ocean business community in designing the planning process itself. This is more likely to create a sense of co-ownership of the process, lead to constructive industry input into the planning, and result in participation in implementing the outputs of the planning.

MEAM: Any examples of ocean planning processes that have done a particularly good job engaging ocean businesses?

Holthus: At the World Ocean Council we are in the process of reviewing and evaluating marine planning efforts, their interaction with the business community, and what benefits, if any, for the business community resulted from previous marine planning efforts. We will be able to provide much more information on this later this year.

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BOX: Barriers to industry involvement in MSP

In an essay published in the June-July 2010 issue of MEAM, Paul Holthus of the World Ocean Council described three main barriers to industry involvement in MSP:

- Lack of understanding of the MSP "movement" and momentum;
- Limited engagement in the multi-stakeholder processes characteristic of MSP because industry is engaged in sectoral processes; and
- Lack of structure and processes engaging the diverse ocean business community in MSP in a systematic manner that identifies each kind of industry relevant to the planning area and specifically engages individual companies.

For more, see "[Marine spatial planning and ocean industries](#)", MEAM 3:6.

BOX: More resources on maritime industries and their roles in ocean planning

- "The Shipping Industry and Marine Spatial Planning: A professional approach": <http://bit.ly/MSPshipping>
 - "Offshore Energy Development: How Marine Spatial Planning Could Improve the Leasing/Permitting Processes for Offshore Wind and Offshore Oil/Natural Gas Development": <http://bit.ly/offshoreenergyMSPguide>
 - Multiple resources from the World Ocean Council (www.oceanCouncil.org/site/resources.php), including the outcomes of the 2014 Business Forum on Ocean Policy and Planning (<http://bit.ly/WOCbusinessforum>) and an analysis of industry comments on the US National Ocean Policy (<http://bit.ly/NOPcomments>)
 - IUCN Business and Biodiversity Programme: www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business
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BOX: Who are you going to call?: The role of boundary organizations in engaging business

"Boundary organizations" are institutions that facilitate collaboration and information exchange among diverse sectors. An example is the World Ocean Council (see article above), whose programs help bridge the divide between for-profit businesses and the entities that traditionally coordinate ocean planning processes (government, NGOs, and academia). The council combines knowledge of the current status of ocean planning processes with knowledge of the interests, constraints, operations, and leadership of businesses and industries relevant to ocean planning.

Boundary organizations can also operate as joint public-private mechanisms. An example of this is the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary System Business Advisory Council in the US (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/bac/welcome.html>). This council was established in 2013-14 to provide advice and recommendations to the National Marine Sanctuary System about its relationship with the ocean business community. Members of the council represent diverse interests such as travel and tourism, recreation, fishing, transportation, communication and marketing, and energy, among others. According to council coordinator Rebecca Holyoke of NOAA and an initiating staff member Elizabeth Moore of NOAA:

"Businesses often are not seen as stewards of the ocean, and government agencies - especially those protecting the ocean - aren't always viewed as proponents of ocean use. We hope the Business Advisory Council will help change these entrenched viewpoints and lead to more cooperative relationships and, ultimately, enhanced ocean protection."

Another model for an ocean boundary organization is The Maritime Alliance (www.TheMaritimeAlliance.org), a San Diego, California-based organization focused on promoting sustainable, science-based ocean industries. The Maritime Alliance and its Foundation are currently working to mobilize support and financing for an MSP plan for San Diego County that would serve as a test bed and model for the State of California. Michael Jones, the President of The Maritime Alliance and The Maritime Alliance Foundation, told MEAM:

"Over the last couple of years we have spoken at length with interested parties - economic development officials, elected officials, NGOs, Port of San Diego, private companies across a series of ocean industry sectors (including commercial and recreational fishing), State and Federal agencies and others - to position MSP as a process that can be a win-win scenario where a balance of conservation and economic development is possible.... Ocean planners need to work with industry to create this near-term win-win situation that allows industry to see why it makes sense to participate in MSP."

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*** BOX: Is integrated use, as opposed to ecosystem-based planning, becoming the overarching focus of European MSP?**

In a recent blog published on OpenChannels.org ("European marine spatial planning policies towards the good environmental status of our seas are veering off course?"), Peter Jones, Reader in the Department of Geography of University College London, described what he sees as a worrying trend in international MSP. In his view, MSP that is focused on integrated use is starting to compete with - or even supersede - ecosystem-based MSP, particularly in the EU:

"This is certainly a worry in Europe, as it would seem European maritime policy is veering off course towards an integrated-use model of maritime spatial planning in which ecosystem protection/restoration through measures such as MPAs to achieve good environmental status is demoted to just another sectoral priority, with trade-offs consistently steered towards economic development. It could also be reflective of a wider worrying trend whereby integrated-use maritime spatial planning becomes the focus rather than ecosystem-based marine spatial planning.

"We need to ensure that marine spatial planning co-evolves and converges with MPAs and wider environmental protection measures to achieve a balance between marine ecosystem protection and maritime blue growth, and that integrated-use maritime spatial planning does not become a competitor to and diverge from an ecosystem-based marine spatial planning approach. EB-MSP approaches could include both sustainable blue growth and effectively governed MPAs.

We need both, but the worry is that MSP is veering off course and that MPAs are sinking down the agenda, along with the health of the marine ecosystems that they help protect."

Read the full blog at www.openchannels.org/node/10076

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