

Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science & Technology's Interagency Working Group on Ocean Partnerships

Federal Agency Interests in Biodiversity From Baseline Inventories & Science to Application

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, world leaders agreed on a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development to meet current needs while leaving a healthy and viable world for future generations. A key agreement adopted at the Earth Summit was the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, www.cbd.int). The CBD commits to maintaining the world's ecological underpinnings while sustaining economic development through three goals: the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. Seventeen years later, it is accepted that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can strengthen ecosystem resilience, improving the ability of ecosystems to provide critical services in the face of increasing pressures associated with global climate change and human activities.

While the U.S. has yet to ratify the CBD, and the conservation of biodiversity is not explicitly legislated, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy identified the conservation of marine biodiversity as a guiding principle underlying its recommendations and as a foundational element of any ecosystem-based management approach. Transforming conservation of marine biodiversity into action is not easily done. U.S. agency activities cover a broad range of oceanic interests and geographic locations, including basic science, applied research and regulation in areas ranging from the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone to the poles. U.S. agencies must ensure that their actions maintain the health and stability of marine ecosystems, considering both monetary and non-monetary benefits. Consequently, across U.S. agencies, there is great interest in baseline natural biodiversity inventories, taxonomy and genetic makeup, quantification of adverse impacts, change and response, and engagement with international activities and frameworks. It is clear that biodiversity is a topic that is too large for any one U.S. agency to take-on by itself. To conserve marine biodiversity, the U.S. should expand upon what is known in the domestic and international marine science community regarding biodiversity and build upon existing agency strengths and mandates through new partnerships, approaches and science.

To address these challenges, an ad hoc group of federal representatives are holding quarterly meetings at the Consortium for Ocean Leadership offices (1201 New York Ave. NW, 4th Floor, Washington DC 20005). The group strives to identify common ground, plan future steps and initiate partnership activities. Additional federal participation is welcome and encouraged.



Biodiversity has many related applications for U.S. agencies, including but not limited to: fisheries; extraction of minerals, sand and gravel; siting of renewable and non-renewable energy facilities; and endangered species and habitat restoration.

Current Topics of Interest:

- Biodiversity Technology and Science
- Biodiversity Metrics, Indices and Proxies
- Applications and Data Sharing
- International Conventions and Frameworks

Upcoming activities:

- Quarterly Interagency Meetings
- Linking of Federal Agency Marine Biodiversity Data Holdings
- Community Workshops on Operationalizing Biodiversity Observations



The National Oceanographic Partnership Program Office supports the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Partnerships.

For more information, please contact the NOPP Office at:
noppo@oceanleadership.org