Last updated October 26, 2023

NOAA Terminology related to Ocean and Coastal Economic Activity

October 2023

DOI: 10.25923/s9bt-k173

U.S. Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Ocean Service

Integrated Ocean Observing System

Introduction

NOAA plays a key role in quantifying the scale and scope of U.S. ocean and coastal economic activity, as well as being the nation's principal source of the core ocean data, information and knowledge that enables this important component of the wider economy.

The purpose of this document is to provide concise definitions of key terms applied to the description of ocean economic activity, and to the provision of the ocean data, information and knowledge needed to support its evolution and development.

The Ocean Economy

NOAA's use of the term *Ocean Economy* corresponds to that of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

The sum of the economic activities of ocean-based industries, together with the assets, goods and services provided by marine ecosystems[1].

This term should be used whenever referencing or describing multi-sector ocean and coastal components of the overall economy.

The Marine Economy

NOAA uses the terms *Marine Economy* to describe quantitative assessments of the U.S. *Ocean Economy*[2], comprising the economic contributions of multi-sector ocean and coast-related activities. The resulting U.S. Marine Economy Satellite Accounts (MESA)[3] have a geographical scope which includes the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Ocean areas within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (approximately 200 nautical miles off the U.S. coast) as well as marginal seas, such as the Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, Long Island Sound, San Francisco Bay, and others. Also included is the U.S. shoreline directly along these bodies of water and the waters and shoreline of the Great Lakes up to the international boundary with Canada.

Consistent with the definition of the *Ocean Economy*, *Marine Economy* assessments acknowledge the essential value and critical importance of ocean-based natural capital and ecosystem services, but do not currently directly quantify or account for them. NOAA has started the process of expanding the MESA to include accounting for natural

[1] OECD (2016), *The Ocean Economy in 2030*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264251724-en.
[2] Defining and Measuring the U.S. Ocean Economy (bea.gov).

[3] mesa0623.pdf (bea.gov)

capital and ecosystem services. However, this dimension of the Marine Economy will not be quantitatively represented in the MESA statistics in the near term.

The Blue Economy

General usage of the term the *Blue Economy* is fluid in its definition, ranging from being directly equivalent to the definition of the Ocean Economy, to inclusion of aspects of sustainability.

NOAA usage of the term *Blue Economy* describes an emerging and developing *Ocean Economy* inclusive of the Great Lakes, that is evolving in response to economic, environmental, and societal challenges. Looking to the future in the Blue Economy, the ocean and ocean resources are utilized in ways that conserve them for future generations, reduce pollution and waste and protect natural ecosystems, at the same time as promoting equity, social justice and responsible business practices. As such, NOAA adopts a slightly modified version of the World Bank definition of the *Blue Economy*[4]:

The sustainable, equitable and socially inclusive use of ocean and Great Lakes resources to benefit economies, livelihoods and ocean ecosystem health.

The Ocean Enterprise

NOAA uses the term *Ocean Enterprise* to describe the provision of the technological means to observe, measure and predict the ocean, and the use of the resulting data and information to help address societal and environmental challenges and support the evolution and development of the *Ocean Economy*. NOAA defines the *Ocean Enterprise* as:

All entities in the public, private, non-profit, research and academic sectors that provide infrastructure and capacity for ocean observation, measurement and forecasting, or who deliver operational ocean information products and services.

This definition is consistent with that used for the *Weather, Water and Climate Enterprise* (usually abbreviated as the *Weather Enterprise*), which was first introduced by the National Academies Fairweather report[5].

[4] World Bank Definition: The Blue Economy is sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean economic health.

[5] National Research Council. 2003. *Fair Weather: Effective Partnership in Weather and Climate Services*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/10610.

When used in the context of the U.S. the geographical scope of the Ocean Enterprise is always inclusive of the Great Lakes, consistent with the geographical scope of the U.S. Marine Economy.

The term *Ocean Enterprise* is often used in association with the concept of the *New Blue Economy*[6]. Usage of the *New Blue Economy* term is intended to add more emphasis to the importance of the *Ocean Enterprise* as the growing knowledge-based component of the overall *Blue Economy*, where data and information serve to address societal challenges and inspire their solutions.

[6] Hotaling,L and R.W. Spinrad. 2021.*Preparing a workforce for the New Blue Economy.* Elsevier. ISBN: 978-0-12-821431-2