

NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

**NERACOOS**

OF COASTAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEMS

2022-2025

**STRATEGIC PLAN**



# PROVIDING OCEAN DATA FOR DECISIONS

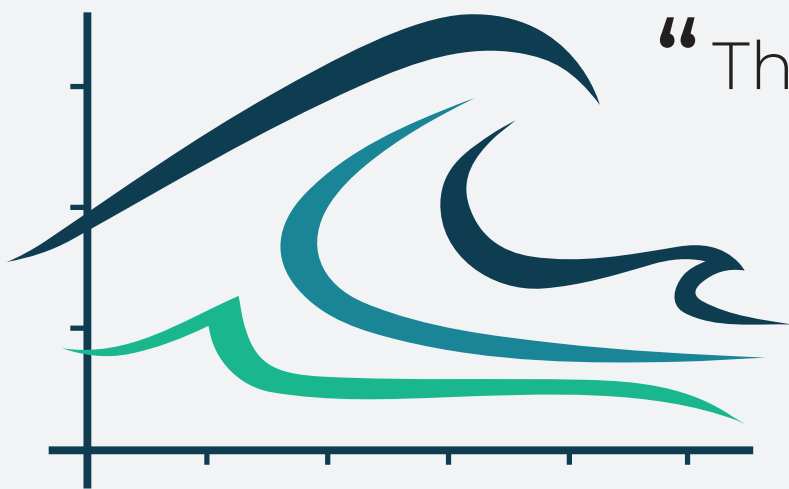
We believe that everybody should have the information they need to advance resilient communities, economies & marine ecosystems.

To that end, we serve people by creating, organizing, and sharing information about the ocean.

We work in ways that are science-based, policy-neutral, and collaborative as we strive to meet the needs of ocean-reliant communities.

# INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, NERACOOS has implemented the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System from Long Island Sound to the Scotian Shelf. Working with public and private sector groups, we coordinate the operation of sensor technologies and models, and provide access to aggregated data and products built to meet user needs. Regularly engaging with ocean users ensures our outputs are fit for purpose, and allows us to anticipate emerging issues.



“This Plan will keep us centered while still leaving room to dream.”

This Strategic Plan braids together stakeholder feedback, the guidance of the Board of Directors, and the vision of NERACOOS staff. These diverse perspectives allowed us to evaluate how NERACOOS's scope and capabilities have evolved, resulting in a Strategic Plan that balances essential ethos with contemporary demands. As the next three years beckon, this Plan will be the frame through which we view both challenges and opportunities, keeping us centered while still leaving us room to dream.

As NERACOOS strives to achieve the goals outlined in this document, we look forward to meeting the future head-on, and doing all we can to serve ocean-reliant communities in the Northeast. To the many who helped shape this Strategic Plan, we are so grateful for your time and contributions. Thank you for your support.

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# 2022-2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

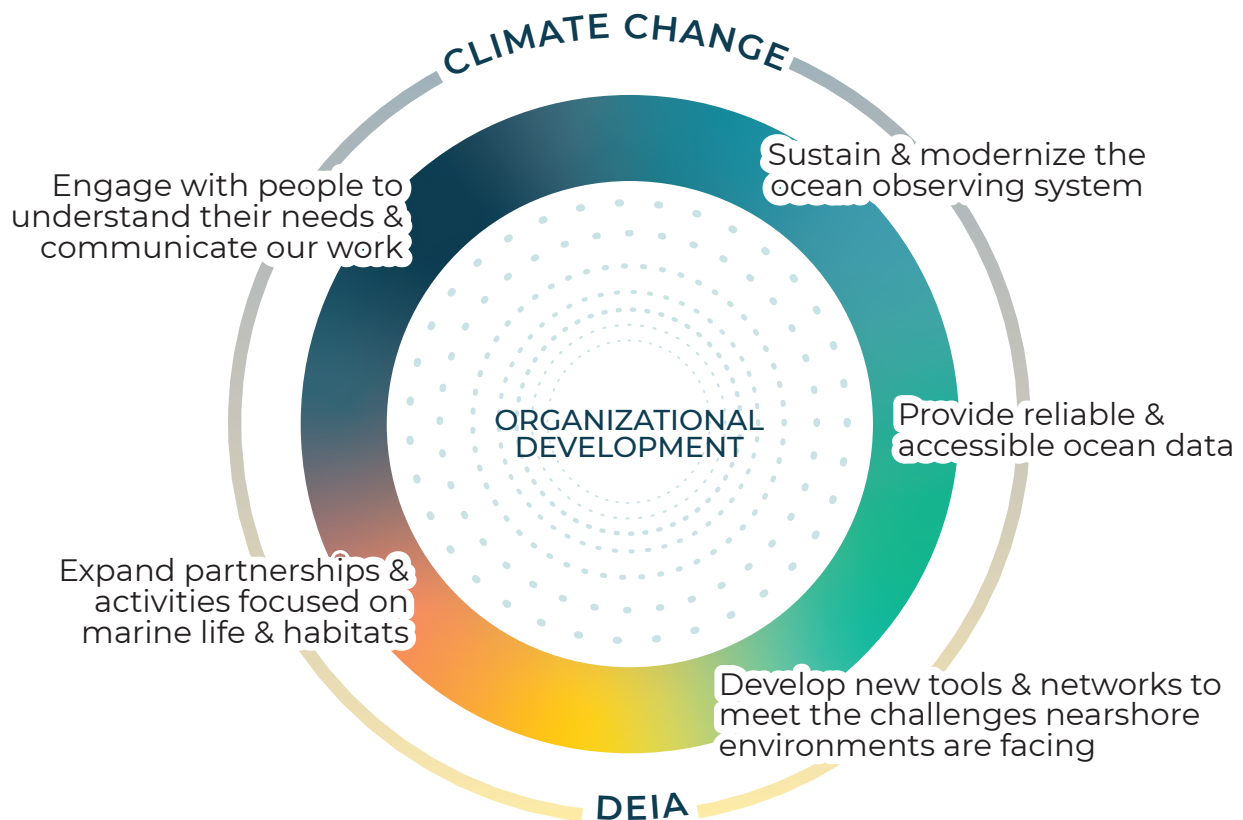
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NERACOOS partners and users identified two strategic priorities of particular importance that will shape the execution of this Plan:

First, our observing activities and infrastructure must keep pace with accelerating **climate change**, the effects of which are already being felt throughout the Northeast.

Second, we must be attentive to the principles of **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)**, ensuring that we serve all people in the region who are connected to the ocean.

These issues will be touchstones that guide many of the actions we take to achieve our vision of communities, economies, and marine ecosystems made more productive and resilient through access to ocean information.





# ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES

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In order to achieve our ambitious agenda, it is essential that NERACOOS remains a strong and effective steward of the regional observing system. Doing so will require that we work toward the following priorities:



Expand staff capacity to support coordination of observing operations, communications, outreach, research, and other vital functions.



Formalize an internship program to increase organizational capacity while supporting young practitioners and new entrants to STEM fields.



Provide professional development opportunities for staff in order to improve our ability to deliver high quality services and keep pace with changing needs.



Work with our Board of Directors to bring new perspectives, industries, and communities into governance of the organization.



Grow and diversify our funding base through novel public-private partnerships, state programs focused on climate resilience and economic development, philanthropic foundations, opportunities emerging through the U.N. Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and other sources.

# GOALS

## observing • data • nearshore

### Sustain and modernize the ocean observing system.

#### Objectives

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- Strengthen the buoy network through sensor upgrades and full mooring replacements.
- Collaboratively develop strategies for expanded use of gliders and other autonomous observing tools, and improved mapping of surface currents throughout the region.
- Maintain and diversify ocean modeling activities to meet evolving end-user needs.
- Capitalize on innovations in sensor technologies, artificial intelligence, machine learning, Big Data, and other tools that can improve the resolution and reliability of the observing system.

### Provide reliable and accessible ocean data.

#### Objectives

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- Implement updated data management guidelines as a NOAA Certified Regional Information Coordination Entity, maintaining high standards and best practices.
- Improve the delivery of observations and model outputs by upgrading existing data products and developing new products informed by community needs.
- Expand discoverability and accessibility of data through online interfaces and outreach to users.

### Develop new tools and networks to meet the challenges nearshore environments are facing.

#### Objectives

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- Support upgrades and new deployments of water quality and water level sensors, particularly to benefit underserved communities.
- Establish a regional community of practice on water level monitoring to share experiences and prioritize deployment of new stations.
- Develop and launch new products providing real-time water quality and water level data, including integrated forecasts and alerts.

# GOALS

## marine life • engagement

### Expand partnerships and activities focused on marine life and habitats.

#### Objectives

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- Promote discoverability, integration, and application of plankton data through a centralized web platform.
- Sustain and expand the geographic and temporal scope of Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) prediction, detection, and tracking capabilities in the Northeast region, including direct monitoring of HABs and the key environmental drivers.
- Sustain and expand established programs to understand dynamics of pelagic ecosystems, while initiating parallel programs in other marine ecosystems, consistent with the objectives of the Integrated Sentinel Monitoring Network.
- Leverage partnerships with nearshore and ocean management areas to establish sentinel sites in a variety of marine environments for tracking effects of climate change.
- Develop and implement strategies for deployment of new biological observing technologies, including passive acoustics, genomics, ocean carbon accounting, and animal tracking.

### Engage with people to understand their needs and communicate our work.

#### Objectives

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- Deepen understanding of how best to serve current and future users of ocean observing information, especially emerging industries such as offshore wind energy, offshore aquaculture, and other users who will be affected by industry growth.
- Coordinate and lead regional initiatives that fulfill stakeholder needs, such as the Northeast Coastal Acidification Network and the Ocean Acidification Information Exchange.
- Increase awareness of conditions by communicating observations, weather events, climate impacts, and other important changes in the ocean to ensure emergency services and the public are informed and safe.
- Audit engagement efforts and work to fill identified gaps in partnerships, services, and products.
- Support the efforts of educators who are bringing information from ocean observing systems into learning spaces.



# NERACOOS

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