



FINAL PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (PEIS) FOR SURVEYING AND MAPPING PROJECTS IN U.S. WATERS FOR COASTAL AND MARINE DATA ACQUISITION

OVERVIEW



The National Ocean Service (NOS) is the nation's leading authority on hydrography, shoreline mapping, and nautical charts. NOS has prepared a Final PEIS to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with NOS recurring data collection projects throughout U.S. coastal and marine waters to characterize submerged features (habitat, bathymetry, marine debris). The Proposed Action analyzed in the Final PEIS is to continue NOS data collection projects.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to gather accurate and timely data on the marine and coastal environment. The need for the Proposed Action is to ensure safety at sea, economic well-being, and the efficient stewardship of public trust resources.

Timespan of the Proposed Action: 5 years

Action Area: The U.S. territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, U.S. rivers, states' offshore waters, and coastal and riparian lands.



NOS Surveying and Mapping Activities

NOS surveying and mapping activities include the use of a variety of equipment and technologies to gather accurate and timely data on the nature and condition of the marine and coastal environment. NOS would continue to conduct projects such as hydrographic surveys for nautical charts, underwater obstruction detection, marine debris surveys, and benthic (sea floor) habitat characteristic surveys.

Alternative A (No Action)

Conduct Surveys and Mapping for Coastal and Marine Data Collection with Current Technology and Methods at Current Funding Levels

Alternative B (NOS Preferred Alternative)

Conduct Surveys and Mapping for Coastal and Marine Data Collection with Equipment Upgrades, Improved Hydroacoustic Devices, and New Tide Stations

Alternative C

Upgrades and Improvements with Greater Funding Support

Changes From Draft to Final: The temporal scope has been reduced from six years (2022 to 2027) to five years (2023 to 2027); although the annual projections of survey efforts have not changed, the total survey effort has decreased. Projects undertaken in 2022 relied on existing NOS procedures. Additionally, NOS is committed to incorporating the best available information into the Final PEIS. The PEIS has been revised since the draft version was published in June 2021 to reflect feedback received through interagency coordination and consultation, stakeholder input, and public comments.

Resources Analyzed: Habitats, Marine Mammals, Sea Turtles, Fish, Aquatic Macroinvertebrates, Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), Birds, Cultural and Historic Resources, Socioeconomic Resources, and Environmental Justice.

Acoustic Modeling: NOS performed acoustic modeling to characterize the potential impacts from the proposed active underwater acoustic sources. The results are presented in the Final PEIS primarily in Section 3.5.2 and Appendix E.