



Commonwealth of The Bahamas

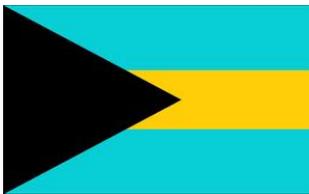
Ministry of Transport and Aviation

National Maritime Policy

April 2015

The Bahamas' National Maritime Policy

April 2015



Bahamas Maritime Authority
Ministry of Transport and Aviation

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Foreword

I am very proud to commend to the people of The Bahamas, The Bahamas National Maritime Policy (BNMP). The BNMP is an historic initiative. It is the Government's definitive expression of the intention to modernize the maritime sector, and to establish a framework which will guide the planning and development of maritime activities in a rational and sustainable manner for the social and economic growth and development of The Bahamas.

The Bahamas has always been a maritime state. Our indigenous settlers travelled the archipelago by dugout canoes. Since then, Bahamians have looked to the sea for sustenance, employment and recreation. This makes sense. We are largely a nation of water, 100,000 square miles of some of the most pristine waters on the planet. Our oceans and seas, our greatest natural resource, represent inestimable untapped opportunity. The BNMP is designed to maximize the sustainable exploitation of this invaluable resource, outlining the strategy for the maritime sector to become the third pillar of our economy. It builds on the Bahamas' highly respected international reputation in tourism and financial services, and the impressive gains it has made as a major flag ship register. The objectives of the BNMP are clear: to expand the maritime sector for future economic development; to provide employment opportunities for Bahamians both nationally and internationally; to facilitate the training of mariners consistent with international norms; to establish programmes and protocols that enhance the safety of mariners and vessels, and to upgrade port infrastructure and port services throughout the country. It is also the basis for effective coordination among all Government agencies and the private sector, for the harmonization of national actions in relation to marine resources in The Bahamas.

As we embark on the implementation of this historic initiative, we are acutely aware of the tremendous challenges facing our oceans and environment as a result of global warming and climate change. Be assured that sustainable development is the guiding principle in the Policy. We are therefore committed to ensuring that our actions are environmentally conscious, and will inure to the benefit of Bahamians today, and for generations yet unborn.

The BNMP follows a series of consultative town meetings and workshops throughout the country that brought together industry stakeholders and Bahamians from all walks of life. I was particularly pleased that the sessions attracted a large number of young Bahamians. This augers well for the expansion of this sector, as they are the very ones who are expected to fill the thousands of jobs it will yield; jobs in port and ship management, sea faring ship repair, shipping agencies, marine insurance, financing, security and maritime law. I encourage young Bahamians to obtain the training required to prepare themselves for a career in the maritime sector, a career with almost limitless possibilities.

I wish to commend the work of the National Maritime Policy Steering Committee, which was comprised of government agencies including the Port Department, Bahamas Customs Department, Department of Marine Resources, Department of Environmental Services, Department of Meteorology, Bahamas Environment Science and Technology Commission, Bahamas National Trust, Bahamas National Geographic Information Systems, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Department of Lands & Surveys, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment & Housing, Ministry of Local Government, Antiquities Monuments and Museums Corporation, Ministry of Tourism,

the Ministry of Grand Bahama, Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Department of Labour, Ministry of Works & Urban Development, Ministry of Transport & Aviation, the Royal Bahamas Police Force, Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Bahamas Maritime Authority. This committee provided invaluable assistance in leading the government's effort. I wish to especially thank the Committee Chairman Commodore Davy Rolle RBDF (ret), Managing Director & CEO of the Bahamas Maritime Authority, for his dedicated efforts, and Dr. Julian Roberts, an Ocean Governance Expert from the Commonwealth Secretariat, who provided essential technical advice to the project.

Finally, I wish to express my very deepest gratitude to the people of The Bahamas who attended the various town meetings held throughout the country and whose experiences and concerns were essential in informing the plan, and without which its authenticity cannot be validated. It is with great pleasure and immense pride that I encourage all Bahamians to read and take ownership of the National Maritime Policy, as we begin in earnest its implementation which I believe will mark a new and exciting paradigm in our national development, one which will strengthen and more strategically position our country in the global arena and provide new opportunities for our people and protect and preserve an invaluable resource for generations yet unborn.

The Hon. Glenys Hanna Martin, MP

Minister of Transport & Aviation

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Executive Summary

The Opportunity

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has rights and responsibilities over approximately 245,000 square miles of maritime space along with associated living and non-living marine resources such as fisheries, aggregates and potentially oil and gas. These waters also support important and sensitive marine habitats, many of which are globally significant. These provide valuable economic, social and cultural benefits, which can, if managed wisely, contribute to the sustainable economic development of The Bahamas.

Sustainable utilisation and management of our maritime space is critical to the long-term socio-economic development of The Bahamas and the sustained supply of these important goods and services relies on a quality environment. However, as human impacts on the ocean increase in measure and complexity, the capacity and resilience of the ocean to withstand combined pressures is being dangerously overstretched.

A key challenge to effective management of marine space is therefore the establishment of governance frameworks that can accommodate and resolve conflicts that arise between the multiplicity of users and uses of marine space, now and in the future. This is, however, a challenging task since different users will often be vying for access to the same space or wanting to utilise resources in different ways.

The Need for a Policy

At present The Bahamas lacks a comprehensive and overarching maritime policy framework within which to manage this maritime space and associated marine resources. To this end, the Government of The Bahamas has developed this integrated National Maritime Policy framework, which aims to promote sustainable economic development of marine resources and activities and avoid inter-sectoral conflicts. The development of this national policy framework will assist the government of The Bahamas to achieve a number of objectives, including: economic development; safeguarding the natural environment; providing for sustainable development; and, preserving a way of life that has sustained generations of Bahamians.

Vision and Goals

The National Maritime Policy sets out a shared vision:

Vision

The improvement in the quality of life for Bahamians by maximising the sustainable utilisation of a natural resource that is in abundant supply, and globally position The Bahamas archipelago as an economic force.

Four high-level goals, of equal importance, based on the concept of sustainable development have been developed:

Goal 1 focusses on supporting ongoing economic activity such as oil storage, bunkering and transhipment facilities, container port facilities and ship maintenance, repair and serving facilities.

Goal 2 focusses on ensuring future economic development and the expansion of the maritime sector domestically and internationally through optimising the use of existing resources and the development of new activities.

Goal 3 focusses on safeguarding the marine environment from environmental threats such as marine pollution, over-exploitation of marine resource, expanded sustainable use of marine resources and focussing on the increased use and access to potential marine renewable energy sources.

Goal 4 focusses on ensuring the safety at sea of vessels transiting The Bahamas and the adjacent international waters, the training of mariners and the preservation of maritime traditions and practices of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

Enablers

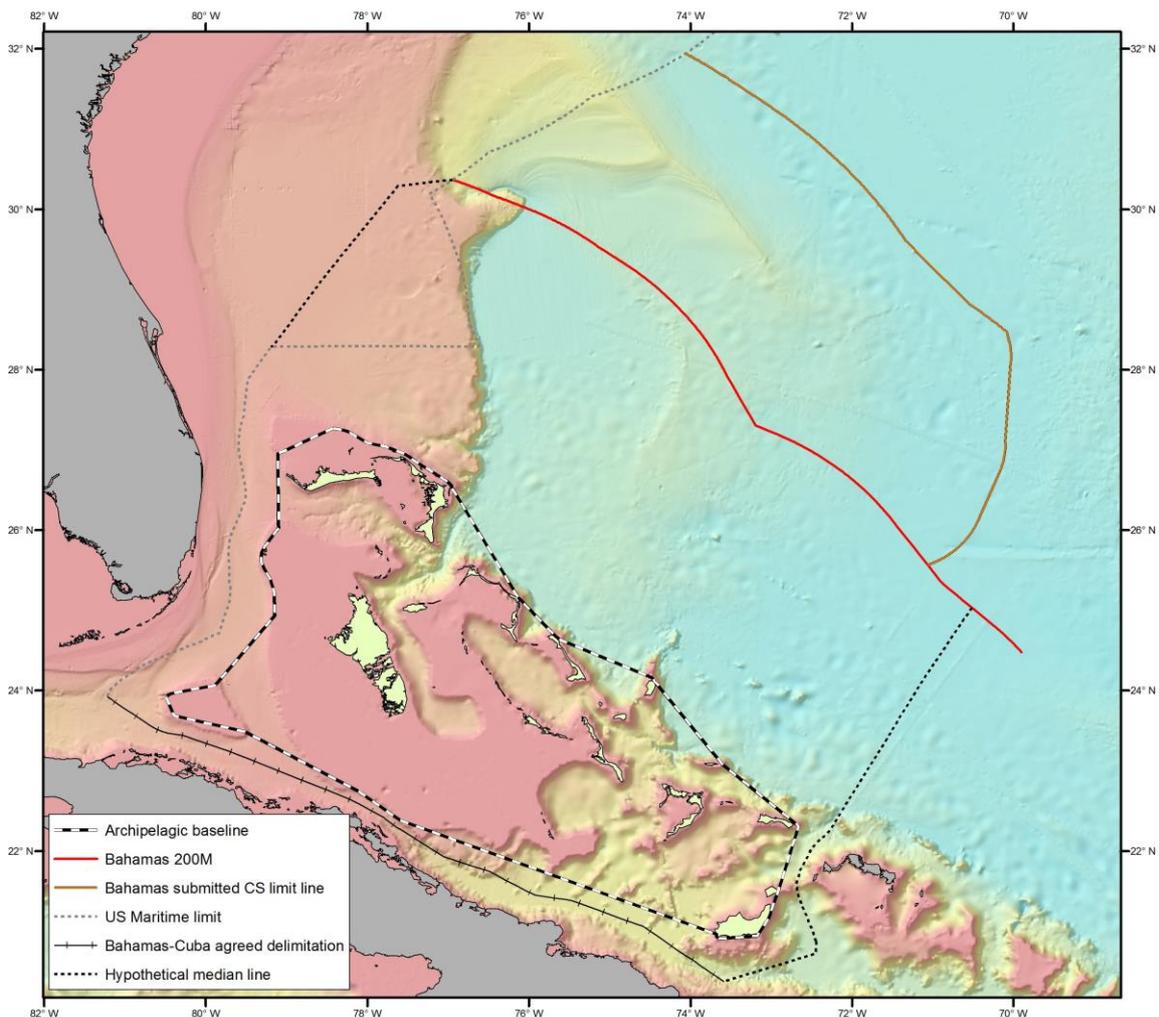
To support the vision and goals, six inter-dependent enablers, that are key to creating the conditions for growth and investment, have been identified as well as actions to develop an ocean-based economy. These enablers display strong synergies.

- Ocean governance
- Regulation and enforcement
- Healthy and productive marine environment
- Climate change resilience
- Education, awareness and participation
- Capacity building, research and information

1 Context

Introduction

Under international law, The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has rights and responsibilities over approximately 245,000 square miles of marine space.¹ The area under national jurisdiction could be significantly extended subject to the outcome of the Government's claim for an extension to the country's continental shelf, anticipated to be an additional area of some 77,000 square miles.



The Bahamas' Maritime Space

Note: Hypothetical and U.S. maritime limits are subject to negotiation and final determination

¹ The Bahamas' exclusive economic zone is estimated to be 242,970 square miles and includes a shelf area of some 41,800 square miles, subject to successful negotiation of its boundaries with neighbouring states. Source, <http://www.searoundus.org/eez/44.aspx> last accessed 19 August 2013.

The ocean is a national asset, supporting a diverse economy. In particular, The Bahamas is globally one of the largest ship registries, with Bahamian flagged vessels plying international waters. The Bahamas also has a proud maritime history and served as a key access point to the discovery of the Americas from Europe some 550 years ago. The Bahamas is intimately linked to its maritime resources as a source of food, recreation and as the basis of the modern tourism industry. A major container port, the transshipment of oils to the Americas and the cruise industry are all modern manifestation of a proud maritime tradition.

The Government of The Bahamas recognises that the marine environment can make a significant contribution to the future sustainable economic development of these islands, with vast potential to tap into the global marine market for seafood, tourism, energy and new applications for health, medicine and technology. However, it is under increasing pressure from many uses and its ability to maintain the diversity and productivity, and to provide a wide array of valuable services to people, is being compromised.

The Bahamas' National Maritime Policy is the Government's policy statement for the management of the nation's entire maritime space with a view to promoting sustained economic growth and development as well as environmental preservation and conservation. The development of the policy has been informed by discussions and consultations with a broad range of marine stakeholders, as well as emerging experience in ocean policy and marine management in the international community.

Why a National Maritime Policy

The Bahamas lacks a comprehensive and overarching maritime policy framework within which to manage its extensive maritime area and the associated resources and activities it supports. Despite the preparation of a number of strategies and policies relating to specific resources and activities, no single overarching legislation or national policy exists to harmonise and coordinate these at the national level. Existing ocean governance arrangements in The Bahamas are characterised by a fragmented policy framework, which is inadequate to support the integrated approach needed in ocean governance.

The Government of The Bahamas recognises that the broad range of activities that are undertaken in its maritime space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole through an integrated, interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach to ensure that development goals, strategies, and projects do not operate at cross purposes. Fundamental changes are therefore required in the way our marine space is managed and regulated. Central to such a change is the need to transition to a more integrated governance approach that considers competing interests for ocean and coastal resources and space, such as environment, tourism, fisheries and energy generation, within a robust framework and a spatial planning perspective.

The development and implementation of an integrated policy framework will assist the government of The Bahamas to achieve a number of objectives, including: economic development; safeguarding the natural environment; providing for sustainable development; and preserving a way of life that has sustained generations of Bahamians.

The National Maritime Policy sets out the new policy direction for modern marine management in The Bahamas. The policy includes a set of strategic actions which set out the Government's initial priority areas of focus. These actions will be further refined and implemented by the Government in collaboration with local communities, marine industries such

as fishing, shipping and oil and gas interests, environmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

This document outlines the overarching framework for the Bahamas' National Maritime Policy and seeks to:

- **Establish the context within which the National Maritime Policy is being developed and implemented;**
- **Set out the framework of a new modern approach to marine management for the 21st century; and**
- **Describe the strategic approach that will be used to achieve the policy objectives.**

The Bahamas' Marine Environment

Covering an area of approximately 100,390 square miles, The Bahamas archipelago consists of over 3,000 islands, cays and rocks or islets. The archipelago contains the largest tropical shallow water area in the Western Atlantic. The unique mix of shallow banks penetrated by deep water channels give rise to three distinct marine ecosystems: coastal and shallow shelf; pelagic; and deep water.

Coastal and shallow shelf ecosystems

In general, the shallow coastal waters of the submerged banks are warm and clear, lacking significant impacts from rivers or other land-based run-off. The coastal ecosystems therefore support extensive coral reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves and areas of wetland, which combine to support the tourism and fishery sectors in The Bahamas.

Pelagic ecosystem

Extending to a depth of approximately 1,000 m, the pelagic ecosystem sustains an enormous food network from plankton to top marine predators such as marlin and tuna and are also attractive to deep-diving whale and dolphin species. The proximity of this deep water offshore environment creates exciting sport fishing opportunities and convenient shipping lanes for cargo and cruise ships alike.

Deep water ecosystem

The deep sea environments of The Bahamas include the waters at depths greater than 1,000 m, the ocean floors of submarine canyons, and the adjacent deep Atlantic Ocean. The environment is dark, cold and has limited food supplies with the majority of the food supplies falling from the surface.

The biodiversity of these zones includes a rich diversity of reef and pelagic fish, lobsters, conch, turtles, algae, resident and migratory birds. Offshore waters are also home to numerous species of marine mammal and sea turtles as well as a range of deep water pelagic fish species.

These resources are the basis for The Bahamas' largest industry, tourism and also support a significant and high value domestic fishery for lobster, conch and certain species of fish.

Threats Facing the Marine Environment

The marine environment's ability to maintain its diversity and productivity, and to provide a wide array of valuable services to people, is increasingly being compromised and a number of specific threats pose a risk to The Bahamas' marine environment.

Climate change

Of all the threats affecting marine and coastal environments in The Bahamas, climate change is considered to pose the greatest risk, since approximately 80% of The Bahamas' landmass lies within 1.5 meters (5 ft) of the high tide mark. The effects of climate change are increasingly impacting the health of a range of coastal habitats, particularly coral reefs - the most obvious impact being physical damage from hurricanes, several of which have resulted in significant reef damage and alteration. In recent years a number of coral bleaching events have also been observed.

Habitat damage

All of the key marine habitats are sensitive to the impacts of human activities but the most sensitive habitats include coral reefs, seagrasses and mangroves. Damage to marine habitats arising from yacht anchor damage, removal of mangroves for coastal development and in particular the impact of ship groundings on the reef are an ongoing concern in The Bahamas.

The health of coral reefs and associated biodiversity are seen as of critical importance both from both environmental and economic perspectives due to the strong reliance on the tourism sector.

Sustainable use of marine resources

Significant pressure on fishery resources is caused by numerous factors including over harvesting, illegal fishing by Bahamian and non-Bahaman vessels, lack of enforcement - particularly of recreational catches - and lack of other employment resulting in more people fishing as a livelihood. The important future potential that marine resources play in food security and supporting sustainable livelihoods is a matter of the utmost importance for The Bahamas.

Marine invasive species

The introduction of marine invasive species is a serious concern for The Bahamas. In recent years a significant threat to marine species has entered Bahamian waters in the form of the lionfish. The numbers of lionfish have increased dramatically from the first sighting in 2006, with tens of thousands throughout the Bahamian archipelago today. These fish are feeding on commercially important juvenile and adult fish species such as grunts and snapper and may significantly impact other species as well as the health of the coral reef ecosystem.

The risk of further introductions from ships via ballast water and hull fouling is high, due to the operation of a major trans-shipment terminal in Freeport, as well as the large numbers of cruise ships that visit the islands throughout the year.

Marine pollution

Pollution is evident in coastal waters throughout The Bahamas, particularly in enclosed bays and harbours. The limited tidal flows around many of the islands results in very little flushing and long residence times for some contaminants. Sources of pollution include domestic sewage systems, yachts, ships, storm water runoff and dredging activities.

Underwater cultural heritage

The shallow waters of The Bahamas contain a significant number of underwater cultural heritage sites, many of which are undocumented. It is thought that many of these sites contain valuable artefacts. The unregulated and uncontrolled exploration and excavation of marine archaeological sites along with the removal of valuable artefacts, which have been taken out of The Bahamas are a major concern.

Policy Context

In the context of future management of the nation's ocean space, three key policy directions have been identified by the Government:

1. Increase economic activity, increase revenue and diversify the current economy;
2. Create jobs; and
3. Ensure such development does not jeopardise the natural capital upon which much of the Bahamian economy depends.

The Government's *Charter for Governance* provides a vision for the future social and economic development of The Bahamas and sets out a comprehensive strategy for achieving that vision. The Charter is built around three key pillars, namely:

1. Changing the economic course;
2. Promoting social development; and
3. Changing the course of national security.

In particular, the Charter notes that job creation is an essential requirement for development.

The Government has clearly identified the maritime sector as one of the key areas for future economic development with efforts to focus on, among other areas:

- Promote mariculture as a significant and sustainable industry by 2030.
- Restore The Bahamas as the premier tourist destination in the region.
- Emphasise protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources, oceans and undeveloped land.
- Translate the 'full circle economy' model of the Spanish Wells fishing industry to the other Family Islands in a variety of different industries.
- Return the northern region islands to their prominence as yachting and fishing locations through a policy of maintaining and advancing fishing and tourism.
- Partner with the cruise ship industry to bring greater value to communities.
- In addition, the Government has recognised that expansion of the Panama Canal presents opportunities to expand the role of The Bahamas as a regional maritime hub.

A number of sector specific policies are highly relevant for the management of marine resources in The Bahamas.

- Draft National Environmental Policy
- Department of Marine Resources' Five Year Sector Strategic Plan
- Sustainable Tourism Policy
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
- The Bahamas National Trust Strategic Plan 2013-2017
- National Wetlands Policy

An Ocean of Opportunity

The principal driver for economic growth is market demand for products and services, shaped by consumer preference underpinned by global competitiveness or a comparative market advantage. While it is difficult to appreciate the potential for new economic pursuits to generate value and national economic growth, what is important is that the right enabling environment is created to attract and support future investment.

Through the implementation of the National Maritime Policy, the Government of The Bahamas intends to facilitate economic growth through maximising the comparative advantage provided by the unique features of The Bahamas and creating a competitive and business-friendly governance, policy and planning environment for marine activities. Identification of market opportunities needs to focus on growth and development of existing marine uses and activities as well as the development of new and emerging opportunities.

Global Ocean Market

The global ocean market is estimated to be valued at approximately US\$1,650 billion/year, contributing approximately 2% to the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Marine services such as tourism and shipping provide the largest proportion (US\$1,050 billion), followed by sectors categorised as marine resources (US\$460 billion) and marine manufacturing (US\$130 billion). Overall, marine industries support some 350 million jobs globally.

Ocean Uses and Activities in The Bahamas

Marine uses and activities already contribute significantly to the overall economy of The Bahamas and are fundamental to the wellbeing of its citizens; through direct economic activities, provision of environmental services, and as home to much of the population. There are also strong cultural attachments to coastal resources and their uses. The major beneficial uses of the marine environment include:

- Shipping and port services
- Fisheries (commercial, subsistence and recreational)
- Tourism (including cruise ships, recreational yachting and SCUBA diving)
- Dredging and aggregate extraction
- Conservation and environmental protection

These, and other, marine industries have excellent potential to contribute to future economic and employment growth and offer an important opportunity where alternative investment and employment opportunities are limited.

In addition to the specific activities listed above, the marine environment provides a variety of goods and services essential to economic growth and social development in The Bahamas. The sustained supply of goods and services from the marine environment is central to the future wellbeing and prosperity of the islands. This supply depends not just on the presence, but also the quantity and quality of marine biodiversity.

2 A Vision for the Ocean

Vision

The improvement in the quality of life for Bahamians by maximising the sustainable utilisation of a natural resource that is in abundant supply, and globally position The Bahamas archipelago as an economic force.

Purpose of the National Maritime Policy

The purpose of the National Maritime Policy is to establish a framework that can guide the planning and development of maritime activities in a rational and sustainable manner for the social and economic development of The Bahamas. This policy is the basis for effective coordination among all Government agencies with responsibility for maritime and ocean affairs and the harmonisation of national actions in relation to the marine resources of The Bahamas.

The strategic actions included in this policy set out a road map for the implementation of the National Maritime Policy. These include a number of short and medium term actions designed to enhance the implementation of the policy objectives of the National Maritime Policy. While the actions should not be seen as a prescriptive work plan, they are expected to contribute to sector specific work plans in different government agencies and to help direct the work they undertake on behalf of the Government of The Bahamas.

Scope of the National Maritime Policy

The geographic scope of the National Maritime Policy is the coastline and all marine and archipelagic waters within the 200 nautical mile limits of exclusive economic zone of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

While the policy applies to all uses and activities in the marine environment, it recognises that additional sector-specific policies and action plans may already exist or be required in the future, and provides a framework for their integration into a broader national maritime policy framework. In many cases the policies reflected in this policy should also be taken into account in the terrestrial planning system and other consenting regimes which affect or might affect the marine area

3 Policy Framework and Actions

Goals and Guiding Principles

The policy framework is intended to guide the co-ordination and management of maritime activities, although all levels of government retain respective legislative and jurisdictional responsibilities and authorities.

The stated Goals of the National Maritime Policy are to:



The National Maritime Policy is based on the following guiding principles that should guide all marine management decision making. They should be considered together and should be applied to all policies, plans, regulations, decisions and actions affecting access to and use of the marine environment.

Ten Guiding Principles for Integrated Ocean Governance

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Sustainable Development | 6. Knowledge Based Decision Making |
| 2. The Right to Development | 7. Precautionary Approach |
| 3. Ecosystem Based Management | 8. Public Participation |
| 4. Integrated Ocean Governance | 9. Access and Benefit Sharing |
| 5. Duty of Care & Accountability | 10. User Pays |

Enablers

In order to realize the Vision and the Goals for the National Maritime Policy, six key thematic areas (**enablers**) have been identified that are vital for creating the conditions for growth and investment. These enablers are not prioritized in order of importance and there are strong inter-relationships and synergies between them.



In total, 58 actions have been identified to support implementation of this policy. Each action is linked to the appropriate goal (1-4) with timelines identified for the delivery of each

Policy Statement

1. Ocean Governance

Governance is an overarching theme that is an essential part of the National Maritime Policy. Good governance and coordination across government is essential to achieving our Vision and Goals. The overall aim of reforming the current governance arrangements should therefore be to establish, strengthen, and implement effective governance mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the National Maritime Policy and support creation of an enabling environment that supports future economic investment.

Issue

The absence of clearly defined maritime boundaries in The Bahamas may inhibit the management of the ocean space and marine resources and may create obstacles to the exercise of rights accorded under international law. The current jurisdictional uncertainties also undermine maritime law enforcement and security activities undertaken in The Bahamas.

Policy

- 1.1 Settlement of unresolved maritime boundaries should be accorded a priority and concerted action taken to finalise boundaries with neighbouring States in order to secure, exercise and protect rights and jurisdiction over marine areas and resources.

Issue

Planning and management for multiple uses requires the full range of uses, users and values to be considered, through an integrated, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach. The development and implementation of The Bahamas' National Maritime Policy will require an orderly process of planning and assessment, consultation and collective decision making, policy making, coordination and management. An important first step will therefore be establishment of an effective coordination mechanism, within existing organisational structures, that brings together senior representatives of agencies with an involvement in maritime and ocean matters.

Policy

- 1.2 Establish and implement a clear coordinated institutional mechanism for integrated marine management across relevant sectors such as fisheries, tourism, transport and environment.
- 1.3 Promote a shift from the traditional sector-specific management approaches to a more integrated 'whole of government' approach that recognise the contribution the maritime economy can make to national development goals.
- 1.4 Establish a comprehensive system of marine licencing for all marine activities.
- 1.5 Implement multiple-use marine spatial planning and zoning mechanisms for improved planning and control of marine activities.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
1	Negotiate, agree and delimit maritime boundaries with the United States, Haiti and Turks and Caicos Islands.	2, 3, 4	1-3 yrs
2	<p>Identify and mandate, by mid-2014, a lead agency to establish and coordinate an Inter-Departmental Marine Coordination Group (MCG) to function as a high-level advisory committee to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet.</p> <p>The MCG should be composed of senior representatives of the Ministries in charge of Transport, Fisheries, Environmental Protection, Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Attorney General’s Office, Defence and Customs, as well as representatives from the Family Islands.</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	<1 yrs
3	<p>Establish a system of licencing for all marine activities including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - construction of marine structures including laying of cables and pipelines dredging and aggregate mining - disposal of waste at sea - fishing; vessels - foreshore development - discharges - access to marine heritage sites (e.g. historic wrecks). 	1, 2, 3	3-5 yrs
4	Establish a national marine spatial planning programme to undertake marine spatial planning.	1, 2, 3, 4	1-3 yrs

2. Regulation and Enforcement

Creating the conditions needed for effective management of The Bahamas' maritime space and future economic growth depends on a robust maritime regulatory regime combined with an effective and efficient surveillance and enforcement system. In order to promote a safe, secure and environmentally protected marine environment that provides for the needs of future generations of Bahamians as well as providing an attractive investment environment, The Bahamas must improve its national capabilities in these areas.

Issue

There is currently no overarching legislation dealing with maritime activities and The Bahamas does not have a marine licencing regime, other than for fishing. As a result, a number of activities currently fall outside a statutory process and are dealt with on an ad hoc basis under Ministerial delegation whereas other areas are not adequately regulated. Of critical importance to future economic development is the fact that the legal framework does not anticipate or provide an enabling environment for future uses of the marine environment.

Policy

- 2.1 Update national legal frameworks that give effect to international/regional obligations to reflect an integrated approach to planning and management of marine space.

Issue

The security of marine resources from illegal and unregulated exploitation is a major concern for Bahamians. The Government recognises that current regulations are not enforced robustly. Gaps in the maritime surveillance and enforcement system should be addressed as a priority.

Policy

- 2.2 Strengthen monitoring, compliance and enforcement initiatives at sea and at ports of entry/landing sites.
- 2.3 Promote greater integration of RBPF and RBDF personnel and assets into maritime surveillance and enforcement activities.

Issue

Poaching by foreign vessels from neighbouring countries and violations by domestic fishermen are common, especially illegal use of chemicals and air compressors, abandonment of traps, illegal harvesting of protected juveniles and illegal harvesting of species during their respective closed seasons. Monitoring, surveillance and enforcement of fishery regulations are therefore recognised as critical areas if existing stocks are to be protected and enhanced. Too few fisheries officers are available on the Family Islands and there is a lack of presence of enforcement officers at landing sites and on the water.

Policy

2.5 Ensure effective monitoring, compliance and enforcement with respect to fishing activities across The Bahamas.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
5	Enact new legislation to control the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Protection of the environment and requirements for EIAs; – Protection of underwater cultural heritage; – Control of marine invasive organisms; – Dredging and aggregate extraction; – Requirements for onshore and offshore oil storage and transfer sites to have oil spill contingency plans. 	1, 2, 3	1-5 yrs
6	Update, as a matter of priority the both the <i>Continental Shelf Act</i> and the <i>Antiquities, Monuments and Museum Act</i> (and Regulations).	1, 2, 3	1-3 yrs
7	Increase surveillance time at sea and at ports of entry/landing sites.	3, 4	1-3 yrs
8	Increase the number of fishery enforcement officers particularly in the Family Islands.	2, 3	1-3 yrs
9	Asses the utility of Automated Identification Systems (AIS) and other Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) as a way of carrying out surveillance for existing Marine Protected Areas.	3, 4	3-5 yrs
10	Establish a greater degree of integration of RBPF and RBDF personnel and assets into maritime surveillance and enforcement.	2, 3, 4	1-3 yrs

3. Healthy and Productive Marine Environment

The Bahamas' marine waters are a key national asset and the health of the oceans is inextricably linked to the sustainability of economic livelihoods for coastal communities and Bahamians generally. They also provide a range of essential goods and services that would be extremely costly to restore or replace once lost. If our use of them is well managed they can meet a broad range of economic, social and cultural aspirations. The Government recognises that ecosystem health and integrity is fundamental to ecologically sustainable development.

Issue

Damage to marine ecosystems and depletion of marine resources are concerns felt by many Bahamians with many supporting the need for active measures to protect marine habitats and biodiversity. The health of coral reefs and associated biodiversity are seen as of critical importance both from an environmental perspective and as an economic one due to the strong reliance on the tourism sector.

Policy

- 3.1 Ensure activities undertaken in the marine environment do not cause damage or harm to environmental, social and economic values.
- 3.2 Conserve and enhance the overall quality of the marine environment through protection, maintenance or restoration of natural and physical features, habitats, processes and biological diversity and the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources.
- 3.3 Promote sustainable use of marine resources, taking into account social, economic and environmental needs, and ensure its incorporation into national development policies and planning framework to ensure long term social and economic development.
- 3.4 Reduce all sources of pollution to the marine environment.
- 3.5 Expand the current system of marine protected areas taking into account the need to better conserve stocks of lobster and conch and protection of key coastal habitats.

Issue

The shallow waters of The Bahamas contain a significant number of underwater cultural heritage sites and valuable artefacts, many of which are undocumented. The uncontrolled exploration and excavation of marine archaeological sites along with the removal of valuable artefacts, are a cause of concern and measures are required to better protect our maritime cultural heritage.

Policy

- 3.6 Support and promote efforts to protect underwater cultural heritage.
- 3.7 Strengthen the protection of cultural heritage resources by enhancing the current legal framework and improving coordination among MPAs.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
11	Finalise and enact a national environmental protection Act that sets out the requirements for EIA and defines activities that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may be permitted as of right; - are subject to licencing; - are prohibited. 	2, 3	<1 yrs
12	Ensure that all existing marine protected areas have management plans that specify areas where anchoring is permitted/prohibited.	3	3-5 yrs
13	Increase provision of yacht mooring facilities within MPAs.	3	3-5 yrs
14	Provide additional support to the Department of Marine Resources, the BNT, the Ministry of the Environment and Housing, to allow identification and designation of additional MPAs for the protection of key sensitive habitats in The Bahamas.	3	3-5 yrs
15	Establish port entry standards for certain classes of vessel that present a high risk of invasive species introduction via hull fouling.	3, 4	1-3 yrs
16	Broaden legislation to include all territorial waters, adopt and set standards for the control of sewage discharges from vessels.	3, 4	1-3 yrs
17	In the context of a multi-use spatial plan, establish zero discharge areas in highly sensitive areas.	3	3-5 yrs
18	Update the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution) Act to include the requirement for site specific oil spill contingency plans.	1, 2, 3	1-3 yrs
19	Undertake a national oil spill risk assessment.	3	1-3 yrs
20	Undertake regular exercising of the national oil spill response team including with key industry operators in The Bahamas.	3	<1 yrs
21	Consider what steps are required to enable the Government of The Bahamas to ratify the IMO Ballast Water Convention.	3, 4	1-3 yrs
22	Enforce the Antiquities, Monuments and Museum Act and Regulations to provide for licensing and permits.	3	1-3 yrs

4. Climate Change Resilience

The Bahamas appears as one of the top three countries most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change such as coral bleaching, increasingly powerful tropical hurricanes and rising sea level. Throughout The Bahamas, tourism resorts, coastal towns and infrastructure are at risk, given their location at or near present sea level and their proximity to the coast. Relocation or fortifying coastal infrastructure for coastal protection will become financially burdensome for the Government, particularly in the Family Islands. A more integrated approach to planning will afford the tools to help minimize hazards of flooding and erosion and investments in coastal structures and optimize performance.

Policy

- 4.1 Recognise and manage the increasing risk of climate change through the incorporation of appropriate adaptation and resilience-building strategies into sustainable development, conservation and governance actions.
- 4.2 Implement National Disaster Prevention and Response Plans in relation to risk management in maritime space and coastal areas.
- 4.3 Recognise the vital role coastal habitats play in the protection of coastal communities and infrastructure in coastal planning and decision making.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
23	Implement the 2005 <i>National Policy for the Adaptation to Climate Change</i> in full.	1, 2, 3	1-3 yrs
24	Increase the number of MPAs as tools to increase ecosystem (particularly coral reef) resilience.	3	3-5 yrs
25	Undertake mapping of key coastal habitats and ensure appropriate weight is given to their importance in coastal planning and development.	1, 2, 3	1-3 yrs

5. Education, Awareness and Participation

The care of the marine environment is the responsibility of everyone. Lack of awareness and environmental education however, results in low levels of personal responsibility. All those who utilize the resources such as fishermen, tourists, sport fishers, dive operators, resort owners and every day Bahamians must be informed. It is necessary to invest in medium- and long-term measures that provide a way of increasingly sensitizing both local communities and visitors to the importance of the marine environment in the nation's development. There is also a need to make available accurate, timely and documented official information on proposed ocean governance activities through media coverage and public fora, meetings and discussions, and information education campaigns.

Issue

Lack of awareness and environmental education opportunities for coastal inhabitants and visitors to the islands is a risk to the long term sustainable development of the ocean economy. Information and education are important to promoting such understanding and enhancing personal levels of responsibility. Emphasis should be placed on sensitising the population on coastal environmental issues, introducing relevant subjects through the school curriculum by involving the Ministry of Education, as well as capacity building especially for office bearers for effective implementation of the policies and activities.

Policy

- 5.1 Build public and visitor awareness of the importance of the sea and its resources and protection of the marine environment.
- 5.2 Increase public awareness of oceans and ocean issues and engagement in stewardship initiatives and cooperating to find environmental and sustainable development solutions

Issue

Community and stakeholder participation is a key to promoting and instituting a duty of care for the marine environment. A more inclusive form of stakeholder engagement that adopts a broader partnership approach whereby stakeholders are involved throughout the process with transparency and accountability between all parties, is required. Partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society must be built in order to ensure co-responsibility for coastal management and to empower stakeholders to participate effectively.

Policy

- 5.3 Establish a process to identify and stimulate the participation of local communities and local industries in planning and management strategies.
- 5.4 Ensure that marine management decisions and how they are made are open for public scrutiny.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
26	Develop outreach programmes that create public awareness of the importance of the sea and its resources.	2, 3	1-3 yrs
27	Encourage education programmes aimed at promoting ocean-related activities in schools by promoting a Bahamas' Ocean Literacy programme (http://oceanliteracy.wp2.coexploration.org/)	3	3-5 yrs
28	Implement a visitor marine awareness programme at entry points to the country (e.g. cruise ship berths, marinas, airports, Customs and Immigration)	3	3-5 yrs
29	Implement a specific education, compliance and enforcement effort targeted at visiting yachts to ensure they are not exceeding quota or fishing out of season.	3	1-3 yrs
30	Engage with and sensitise the media regarding the marine environment and marine activities	2, 3	1-3 yrs
31	Encourage local communities and industries to participate in planning and management strategies and share responsibility for the management of ocean resources.	2, 3	1, 2 ,3
32	Provide support to empower communities to take on resource management and monitoring responsibilities	2, 3	2, 3
33	Introduce a system of public consultation over major marine developments.	1, 2, 3	2, 3

6. Capacity Building, Research and Information

Research and development support sustainable economic growth and job creation through the development of new products and services as well as facilitating better management of the marine environment. Knowledge of the marine environment is also a critical need for effective decision making. The more that is known about the marine environment, the better people's interaction with it can be managed. Integrating diverse and complex information, supplemented by new research contributes to the advancement and management of oceans resources. Identifying and defining ongoing strategic research and capacity needs, together with appropriate funding, resources and partnerships, will therefore be essential for achieving long term economic growth from an ocean-based economy.

Issue

The development of an ocean-based economy will depend to a large extent on the availability of relevant skill sets to respond to the needs of the market. The Bahamas will need to build the right skill set to support the development of indigenous Bahamian industry, attract foreign direct investment and support the efficient expansion of existing services and sectors. Identifying future skills needs and market demand trends is critical to achieving our Vision and Goals.

Policy

- 6.1 Promote formal and informal training and capacity building related to marine science, marine affairs and marine management that is relevant to ocean management.
- 6.2 Develop partnerships with the academic and private sectors to support skills development in key marine sectors.

Issue

Indigenous marine research in The Bahamas is not well developed due to a lack of funding and research institutions. This in turn leads to chronic gaps in the technical capacity for marine research, planning and decision making.

Policy

- 6.3 Develop a clear marine research strategy that supports investment for new and emerging opportunities.
- 6.4 Facilitate and support research to increase understanding of the marine environment, its natural processes and cultural marine heritage.

Issue

Governance requires factual information about the geographical occurrence and abundance of ecosystems as well as information on how human actions affect these ecosystems. The marine environment is, however, far from being completely understood and the quality of marine information is an often highlighted variable, leading to decision-making sometimes under considerable uncertainty. Many regulatory agencies have little or no information pertaining to marine resources and activities that they regulate. Agencies are generally unaware of where and how to source spatial marine data to assist in planning and decision making. There is a paucity of spatial data relating to offshore waters, which hampers the potential development of new fishery resources.

Policy

- 6.5 Develop a system of marine spatial planning for improving management of maritime space to achieve economic development and environmental objectives.
- 6.6 Improve co-operation in the collection, monitoring and disseminating of information, including the integration of local knowledge.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
34	Build and maintain the human capacity to meet the needs of the maritime sector; e.g. through tailored education and training programmes and research capacity building. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify future skills needs and labour market supply and demand trends in the marine area; - Tailor higher education, vocational and professional training programmes to meet the identified needs; - Encourage utilisation of employment and training programmes that offer training and upskilling for marine personnel, taking account of local employment needs and opportunities. 	1, 2	1-5 yrs
35	Determine training needs related to marine science, marine affairs and marine management that is relevant to coastal and ocean management.	2, 3	1-3 yrs
36	Promote formal and informal training and capacity building for scientists, technicians and professionals at various levels in marine science, marine affairs and related disciplines	2, 3	1-5 yrs
37	Develop a clear marine research strategy that identifies key data requirements for decision making and supports investment for new and emerging opportunities.	2, 3, 4	1-3 yrs

38	<p>Develop a system to integrate and provide marine-related information now dispersed among different organisations, with a view to organizing such information more efficiently.</p> <p>A logical agency to lead this work would be The Bahamas National GIS Service.</p>	1, 2 , 3 , 4	1-3 yrs
39	<p>Ensure that data sharing arrangements made with organisations undertaking research in Bahamas waters facilitate the free transfer of all data collected to the Government at the conclusion of the research programme.</p>	1, 2 , 3 , 4	1-3 yrs
40	<p>Explore partnership opportunities with third party research organisations to address data gaps identified by the Government.</p>	1, 2 , 3 , 4	1-3 yrs

4 Developing Our Ocean Economy

The Government of The Bahamas has identified the need to diversify economic sectors and in this context is keen to promote the ‘ocean economy’ as a way of diversifying the economy and creating employment opportunities. The Government recognises that the ocean offers further potential for economic benefits to be derived from the sea - both from living and non-living resources - and that there is a need to explore ways of realising this potential. In order to achieve this two areas of focus are necessary:

1. Improve and optimise the economic returns from existing activities and resource utilisation; and
2. Explore opportunities for the development of new economic sectors.

Creating the right enabling environment for business, building technical capacity among the workforce and promoting The Bahamas as an emerging economy for marine sectors are critical for developing our ocean economy.

Increasing Revenue Streams

The Government derives a range of fees and duties from maritime activities, principally from shipping, fishing and yachting. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Licence fees for commercial and recreational fishing
- Fees and levies payable by international vessels calling at Bahamian ports
- Fees payable for registration of recreational vessels
- Fees payable for registration of international vessels and yachts
- Cruising permits for foreign (recreational) yachts
- Fees and levies payable on aggregate extraction

The benefits from the use of The Bahamas’ common ocean resources should be shared by all citizens. The Government recognises that it must govern the use of marine space based on the interests of the whole community and the interests of intergenerational equity, rather than for the benefit of specific sectors. Many of these fees have not been revised for many years and there are certain activities where opportunities exist to increase the level of fees in line with international benchmarks to provide a better economic return to The Bahamas as a whole.

The potential value of other important goods and services have yet to be recognised and the Government will devise further mechanisms to realise this potential based on the values of marine environment goods and services as contributors to the economy.

Policy

- 7.1 Charges for access to, use of and damage to marine resources should reflect the community interest and short- and long-term economic, environmental, social, and cultural costs and benefits.

7.2 The economic value of marine ecosystem services should be recognised and options for monetising these values (such as ‘blue carbon’ initiatives; ‘blue bonds’; ‘debt for adaptation’ programmes) evaluated.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
41	Undertake a comprehensive review of the various existing fees, levies and charges that are received from marine related activities, especially cruise shipping, fishing and yachting. Such a review should include a benchmarking exercise to compare the level of fees and levies with international norms as well as examining areas where no fees are currently collected.	1, 2, 3	<1 yrs
42	Undertake an assessment of coastal habitats to evaluate the potential to implement a broad scale Blue Carbon project.	2, 3	3-5 yrs
43	Establish a Task Force to examine a range of emerging innovative finance options that could be applied in The Bahamas.	2, 3	3,5 yrs

Optimise Returns from Existing Activities

The potential exists to more effectively exploit existing resources and to optimise returns from existing activities. Opportunities to further develop and utilise existing sectors as a means to create jobs and to increase the value of those sectors therefore need to be assessed. For example, the current small size of fishing vessels operating in The Bahamas means that local fishermen are unable to fish further offshore in deeper waters. As a result, potentially lucrative fish stocks are unavailable to local fishermen. Opportunities to further develop and utilise existing sectors as a means to create jobs and to increase the value of those sectors therefore need to be assessed.

Fisheries

The Bahamas has a well-developed commercial and export fishery plus an important recreational/local consumption fishery. The fishing industry is extremely important to the Bahamas, currently supporting 11,000-15,000 jobs locally. However, exploitation of fishery resources is narrowly focussed around a few high value and easy to catch species. Many fishery resources, particularly those offshore and deep water resources are considered to be underexploited providing opportunities for further expansion of the fishery sector.

Issue

Despite its importance, the key issues facing the fishing sector relate to a lack of diversification of target species, resulting in excessive fishing pressure on a few key species (conch, lobster and certain scale fish species). The Government recognises that lack of financial and human capital is preventing fishermen from scaling up existing operations to take advantage of deeper water fisheries, further offshore. This includes both commercial fishing and sport fishing for tourists. There is therefore a clear need for measures to support diversification of the fishing sector to utilise a broader range of species.

Policy

- 8.1 Maintain or restore populations of conch and spiny lobster and identify targets for each fishery at levels that can produce the optimal sustainable yields and ensure sustainable harvests.
- 8.2 Achieve economic growth through development of underexploited pelagic fisheries and exporting fish and fish products.
- 8.3 Diversify the existing fishery by adopting measures to incentivise Bahamians to exploit deeper offshore species.
- 8.4 Increase the knowledge base around key fishery species as a way of improving decision making and management.
- 8.5 Maintain the Government's policy that prohibits foreigners or foreign-owned vessels from engaging in commercial fishing, thereby reserving commercial fishing as an enterprise solely for Bahamians.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
44	Review the application of spatial and temporal management tools for key species with a view to significantly increasing their application to protect and preserve these key resources.	2, 3	1-3 yrs
45	Promote the sustainable development of the commercial long line and sport fisheries for large pelagic species including through the development of appropriate regulations for the fishery.	2	1-3 yrs
46	Develop capacity for optimizing the catches of large pelagic species inhabiting or migrating through the EEZ.	2	3-5 yrs
47	The use of FADs and other fishery enhancement techniques should be evaluated.	2	3-5 yrs
48	Implement a system of certification for Bone Fish guides and require tourists to work with a licensed guide.	2, 3	1-3 yrs

Maritime Transport and Port Facilities

The Bahamas relies heavily on maritime transportation for importing and exporting goods and for serving its tourism industry. Virtually all imports to The Bahamas arrive by sea from Florida ports. The Bahamas also operates one of the largest shipping registries in the world that currently includes approximately 16,000 vessels. Vessel registration is likely to show strong growth in the future.

Although most of the vessels in the Bahamas are foreign-owned, a substantial Bahamian owned industry has also developed to provide container handling, stevedoring, customs brokerage, and local delivery. Domestic and regional shipping is also an important marine activity sustaining socio-economic development in The Bahamas, with the Mail Boat serving a vital social and economic service to the many Family Islands. Foreign interests have also invested in the development of port facilities in The Bahamas. For example long term investment in a multi-acre container port, cruise-ship terminal and repair facility with floating dry-docks, in Grand Bahama.

Further potential for growth in this sector exists, and the Government has signalled its desire to develop this sector strongly to capitalise on the growth of shipping in the region that will result from the expansion of the Panama Canal, The Bahamas being well placed to provide comprehensive trans-shipment services to international vessels transiting their waters.

Issue

The maritime sector is critical to the economic development of The Bahamas. It contributes significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings from both cargo and cruise shipping activities. Some sectors, such as the cruise ship industry, employ significant numbers of people, but Bahamians are significantly under-represented in this industry, despite it being a mainstay of the local economy and the fact that The Bahamas is the single largest flag for cruise ships. The marina and yachting market sector in The Bahamas also represents an opportunity for development and its potential economic impact can be significant.

Policy

- 9.1 Promote The Bahamas as a crewing nation by ensuring that education and training continue to comply with international standards and will support, possibly through legislation, the hiring by shipping companies of Bahamian nationals.
- 9.2 Promote the expansion of ship repair and maintenance activities to support the maritime sector.
- 9.3 Ensure that all ports fulfil requirements regarding depth, width, harbour channel markings and other navigational safety items.
- 9.4 Facilitate the expansion of marina facilities to tap into the growing nautical tourism market and promote The Bahamas as a premier yachting destination.

Issue

The Government has signalled its desire to develop this sector strongly to capitalise on the growth of the maritime sector in the region. The sustainable development of the shipping sector is hinged on the existence of safe, secure and environmentally sound transportation of goods and passengers which adheres to acceptable local and international standards of maritime safety, security and marine environment protection. However, concerns exist about the impacts from international shipping and The Bahamas currently has no overarching strategic framework for managing the maritime sector.

Policy

- 9.5 Ensure that an appropriate framework is developed to achieve safe usage of the Bahamas' marine waters.
- 9.6 Continue to effectively implement and fulfil international obligations under multilateral and bilateral agreements regarding international maritime safety, security and environmental protection standards.
- 9.7 Support the continued development of domestic ferry services as an alternative transport mode, where practicable.
- 9.8 Ensure that Bahamian flagged ships and those foreign ships operating in Bahamian waters operate in accordance with local and international maritime safety, security and environmental protection standards.

Issue

Port State Control (PSC) is a mechanism instituted through the IMO by which a state may conduct limited safety inspections of all foreign vessels calling at its ports to ensure their conformity to maritime safety, security and pollution prevention standards. PSC has demonstrably reduced the incidence of substandard ships calling at ports where it is rigorously enforced.

Policy

- 9.9 Collaborate with the Caribbean and other Regional MOUs to eliminate sub-standard shipping through continued implementation of a Port State Control regime for foreign ships calling at Bahamian ports.
- 9.10 Ensure that Port State Control inspection targets are met.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
49	Undertake a national shipping risk assessment to determine the level of risk from transiting and visiting ships and appropriate risk management measures.	3, 4	1-3 yrs
50	On the basis of the risk assessment, develop a national code for the routing of ships including the promulgation of archipelagic sea lanes.	3, 4	3-5 yrs
51	Regularly review and update shipping related legislative frameworks in conformity to The Bahamas' international obligations.	3, 4	1-5 yrs
52	Ratify the IMO's International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.	3	1-3 yrs
53	Work with The Marina Operators of The Bahamas to develop a Strategic Plan for the development of the marina sector.	2	3-5 yrs
54	Promote the Blue Flag marine programme to marina operators.	2, 3	3-5 yrs

Issue

A number of different agencies have responsibility for managing maritime traffic and port related activities in The Bahamas. Governance of activities such as pilotage, navigational safety, marine oil spill preparedness and response and maritime search and rescue is shared among these agencies with the result that Governance arrangements are often less than optimal if these sectors are to be effectively managed and expanded in the future. This situation potentially leads to inconsistent standards and approaches being applied in the selection and training of pilots and the provision of pilotage services.

Policy

9.11 Develop a more harmonised approach to the regulation of the Bahamas' maritime sector.

Actions

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
55	<p>Establish a single, overarching regulatory authority with responsibility for all shipping in The Bahamas. Such a body would be responsible for <i>inter alia</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flag State, coastal State and port State jurisdiction; - safety of navigation throughout The Bahamas including aids to navigation; - vessel registration, standard setting and licensing of seafarers (including pilots); - marine oil spill preparedness and response as well as salvage and intervention. 	3, 4	1-3 yrs
56	Undertake a review of all fees, levies and charges derived from the maritime sector.	1, 2	1-3 yrs

Future Growth Opportunities

In terms of future uses of the ocean, a number of new and emerging opportunities have been identified that can contribute to the development of an 'ocean economy'. However, while enormous potential exists, there is only limited development experience in The Bahamas. Many of these future opportunities have an essential technological component that will, in some cases, require substantial capital investment.

Proactive promotion by the Government will be necessary because the level of investment risk is probably well beyond the domestic capital market. Foreign investment will therefore form an important component of the realisation of new sources of value. At this stage, however, no Government agency is tasked with exploring such opportunities for development and the government does not have a business development strategy around marine resources and activities.

Aquaculture

Worldwide demand for fish and fishery products is expected to surge in the coming years across all continents. However, capture fisheries production is set to remain static, so that most of the growth will need to come from aquaculture. Most of the future expansion in aquaculture production capacity will probably occur in the ocean, with some of it moving increasingly off-shore to escape the constraints of coastal waters.

Energy from the ocean

Energy is the driver of all economies and access to sustainable energy is a prerequisite for a Green Economy. The marine environment already provides energy sources through offshore petroleum reserves. While The Bahamas is yet to realize any potential for offshore hydrocarbons in its waters, recent studies indicate significant unrisks recoverable prospective petroleum resources, although these may not be economically recoverable. The Bahamas has indicated its desire to pursue offshore petroleum exploration activities. Licenses have been awarded to The Bahamas Petroleum Country and other companies and the first offshore exploration well is expected to be drilled during 2015-2016.

The ocean is also a rich source of potential renewable energy resources, including:

- Wave
- Tidal (rise & fall, currents)
- Ocean currents
- Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)
- Salinity gradients (osmosis)
- Marine-based biomass, e.g. algae.

With growing concern over climate change and increasing global interest in renewable energy, investment in ocean based energy is poised to grow over the next few decades. The Bahamas has also signalled its desire to increase the proportion of power generated from renewable sources to 30% by 2030. Investing in marine renewable energy could transform energy security for The Bahamas.

Ocean related tourism & leisure

In recent years cruise tourism has shown itself to be the fastest growing sector in the leisure travel industry, with the number and size of ships, passengers, ports and profits all on the rise. The long-term prospects for ocean cruise tourism appear healthy.

Looking a couple of decades ahead, new forms of ocean-related tourism are also likely to develop. Underwater hotels and sea-floor/floating resorts already exist, and many more are planned. Deep sea tourist expeditions are another such activity with significant potential. Several companies around the world already offer mid-range dives of between 500 and 1,000 metres, and one specialist operator organises dives of up to 3,000 metres.

Deep marine water products

Deep-sea water is mineral rich and of a high purity. Deep seawater-related products such as desalination bottled water, sea salt and nigari, food and beverages, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, have experienced phenomenal success in countries such as Japan and Hawaii. Some countries are developing such industries based on seawater extracted from depths > 1,000 m.

Biotechnology

Marine biotechnology has the potential to address a raft of major global challenges such as sustainable food supplies, human health, energy security and environmental remediation, and to make a significant contribution to green growth in many industrial sectors. At the same time, marine bio-resources also provide a number of important ecosystem services for the planet and its inhabitants which must be maintained.

Policy

10.1 Develop a National Maritime Economy Investment Strategy.

Activity

No.	Action	Contributes to Goal	Priority
57	Develop a 'National Maritime Economy Investment Strategy' to focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying sectors The Bahamas wishes to develop; - The enabling environment needed to encourage investment and how this can be realised; and - Promotion of The Bahamas as a destination for the development of new maritime sectors. 	1, 2	1-3 yrs
58	Establish <i>Memoranda of Understanding</i> between agencies with joint responsibility for offshore petroleum activities in order to align their statutory responsibilities and competences.	2	<1 yrs

5 Implementing the National Maritime Policy

The National Maritime Policy sets the vision, high level goals and integrated actions that, on implementation, will significantly improve conditions for investment and growth while also protecting the natural values of The Bahamas' marine environment. Implementing the National Maritime Policy will involve new initiatives as well as existing and on-going activities. Implementation requires action under each of the six enablers as well as actions to develop an ocean-based economy.

The areas of activity identified in this policy are those that require new or additional focus in the future, particularly to address the key challenges facing the marine environment. They do not represent all issues and further elaboration will be required to address the full range of issues identified in the National Maritime Policy. Neither do these actions represent the only actions being taken by Government to optimise the opportunities presented by the ocean.

General Approach

Management of marine activities already exists in The Bahamas, and the key to successful implementation of the National Maritime Policy is to build on what already exists – improving the management and making it more efficient and effective. A key step, therefore, in the implementation of the National Maritime Policy is to compare the *status quo* with the vision and objectives defined in this policy. In particular, this will focus on institutional and legal arrangements needed to fulfil the policy objectives.

Implementation of the National Maritime Policy requires an orderly process of planning and assessment, consultation and collective decision making, policy making, coordination and management. Implementation of the National Maritime Policy must be guided by a high-level government entity. This is required to ensure the necessary political engagement and to establish effective coordination mechanisms with other competent entities and the community in general. Considering this context and the critical importance of integration in the management of oceans, it is clearly necessary to establish an effective multi-sectoral institutional framework, within existing organisational structures, to progress the implementation of the policy.

Institutional Arrangements

A number of integrated government delivery mechanism have been identified, therefore important first step in the process is the nomination of a coordinating body. Such a body must be explicitly mandated to take on this role and to provide a coordination role among all national agencies with a mandate for the management of ocean space and resources. While this could be undertaken by a lead agency, initially the Government of The Bahamas will appoint an Inter-Departmental Maritime Coordination Group (MCG), under the coordination of the Minister responsible for Transport and Aviation, to oversee implementation of this policy and the various actions contained therein.

The main tasks of the MCG will be to:

- coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Maritime Policy with other cross-cutting strategies, planning instruments and programmes;
- contribute to the coordination, implementation and monitoring of Government-approved cross-cutting actions, measures and policies related to maritime affairs;
- promote favourable conditions for the attraction of private investment to marine-related activities, in coordination with the competent bodies, making it possible to develop a strong and modern maritime policy, that makes a wise use of the country's resources and assets; and
- stimulate the participation of public and private institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and civil society in the implementation of the National Maritime Policy.

Implementation is based on the following arrangements:

- Individual departments implementing relevant sector-specific policies and strategies;
- Improved inter-departmental communication and engagement;
- Focused task forces with broad participation that address specific actions (e.g. the development of a National Maritime Economy Investment Strategy); and
- Periodic review of progress to commence in 2016.

The National Maritime Policy provides the basis for a new strategic management framework to involve all levels of government and interested parties to work towards a set of common objectives. A mechanism for stakeholder engagement is also necessary. Initially, an advisory group of major stakeholders, including key marine user groups and civil society, may be most useful in the implementation of this policy.

Legal Framework

In order to attract private sector investment and to ensure that future development is sustainable, the necessary legal and regulatory framework will be put in place to provide clear and transparent guidance to the private sector and investors to engage in sustainable business activities in The Bahamas. The following actions will be carried out to establish a comprehensive framework relating to the ocean:

- Legislation enabling the implementation and regulation of new sectors such as aquaculture and renewable energy projects.
- A comprehensive permitting process linked to marine spatial planning.
- Environmental laws for marine-based activities taking into consideration the resulting impact from new projects being considered.
- Creation of a structure for sharing of marine-based data and research findings.
- Mandate governing research activities in the ocean.

