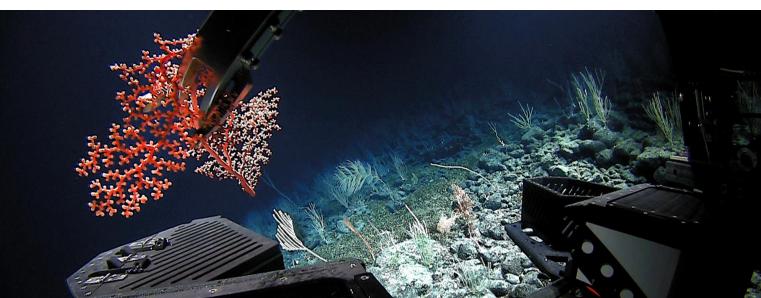
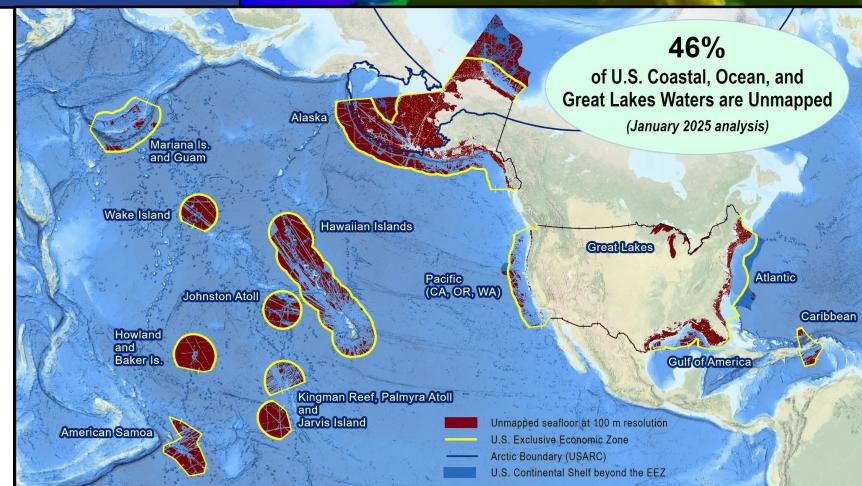


The National Strategy for Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (NOMEC Strategy)

Mapping, exploring, and characterizing U.S. ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters (hereafter referred to as 'U.S. waters') provides fundamental knowledge necessary to enhance the Nation's prosperity and security. The NOMEC [Strategy](#) and [Implementation Plan](#) outline the goals and steps for U.S. Federal agencies to map, explore, and characterize our oceans and coasts. Implementation of the NOMEC Strategy is led by the interagency NOMEC Council and its Interagency Working Groups on Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IWG-OCM) and Ocean Exploration and Characterization (IWG-OEC). The NOMEC Council was established in June 2020 pursuant to a 2019 Presidential Memorandum¹ directing Federal agencies to develop a National strategy to map the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and a strategy to map the Alaskan coastline. Enacting these strategies advances our understanding of our oceans and coastlines and promotes efficient permitting related to ocean exploration activities. The Council and its IWGs were codified in 2022 under Pub. L. 117-263 (33 USC 3408 and 3502)².



The NOMEC Council promotes and coordinates³ mapping, exploration, and characterization activities of waters throughout the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which extends up to 200 nautical miles from shore and covers more seafloor area than all 50 states combined. However, as of January 2025, 46 percent of U.S. waters remain unmapped⁴ and more waters remain unexplored or uncharacterized. The scope of the NOMEC Council's work expanded recently with the December 2023 announcement of the US continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical mile EEZ⁵. This added approximately 288,000 sq nm (nearly 1 million sq km) to U.S. seafloor interests - an area about twice the size of California.



Key Benefits of NOMEC Efforts Include:

- Bolstering national security through maritime domain awareness
- Contributing to economic prosperity by better understanding and managing our resources
- Aiding safe navigation and maritime activity
- Developing technology and building expertise for the public and private sectors



How to Get Involved

Get on our mailing list, or share your existing data and collaborate with us on new data acquisitions and technology innovations. Contact us at: nomec.staff@noaa.gov

For more information, visit the [NOMEC Council website](#)





To improve our understanding of U.S. waters, the NOMEc Strategy sets five goals for action:

- 1. Coordinate interagency efforts and resources to map, explore, and characterize U.S. waters:** Align priorities and efforts across Federal agencies to ensure efficient coordination to meet NOMEc goals 2 through 5.
- 2. Map U.S. waters:** Maintain and evolve mapping protocols⁶ and coordinate mapping efforts to completely map U.S. waters deeper than 40 meters by 2030, and coastal waters (0-40 meters) by 2040.
- 3. Explore and characterize priority areas of U.S. waters:** Identify strategic priorities and best practices to coordinate interagency and cross-sectoral efforts to explore and characterize priority areas of U.S. waters.
- 4. Develop and mature new and emerging science and technologies to map, explore, and characterize U.S. waters:** Coordinate the development, testing, and use of new technologies such as autonomous platforms, artificial intelligence, advanced sensors, and data transfer systems, to increase our ability to measure, sample, and analyze U.S. waters.
- 5. Build public and private partnerships to map, explore, and characterize U.S. waters:** Mapping, exploring, and characterizing U.S. waters requires efforts beyond Federal agencies. Agencies will support cross-sectoral partnerships in the private sector, academia, and non-governmental organizations, to contribute to the growth, efficiency, and value of mapping, exploration, and characterization efforts.



Mapping provides comprehensive data and information needed to understand seafloor characteristics such as depth, topography, bottom type, sediment composition and distribution, underlying geologic structure, and benthic flora and fauna.

Exploration provides a multidisciplinary view of an unknown or poorly understood area of the seafloor, sub-bottom, or water column; and an initial assessment of an area's physical, chemical, geological, biological, archaeological, or other characteristics of such an area.

Characterization provides comprehensive data and interpretations for a specific area of interest of the seafloor, sub-bottom, water column, or hydrologic features, including water masses and currents, in direct support of specific research, resource management, environmental protection, policymaking, or applied mission objectives.

¹ Ocean Mapping of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone and the Shoreline and Nearshore of Alaska, 84 Fed. Reg. 64699 (2019), www.federalregister.gov/d/2019-25618

² James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Title CIII), 33 U.S.C. § 3408 and 3502 (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ263/PLAW-117publ263.pdf>

³ Interagency Working Group on Ocean Exploration and Characterization for the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council. *Strategic Priorities for Ocean Exploration and Characterization of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone*, 2022, https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/NOMEc_OEC_Priorities_Report.pdf

⁴ Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping for the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council. *2025 Progress Report: Unmapped U.S. Waters*, 2025, <https://iocm.noaa.gov/documents/mapping-progress-report2025.pdf>

⁵ United States State Department. Continental Shelf and Maritime Boundaries; Notice of Limits, 2023, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-12-21/pdf/2023-28159.pdf>

⁶ Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping for the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council. *Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol*, 2024, <https://iocm.noaa.gov/standards/SOMPFinal2024.pdf>