Data Governance in Motion

In Partnership With MARCO & NROC

Zoom |Cambridge, MA

Meeting Overview

On November 12, 2025, ROSA hosted *Data Governance in Motion*, a forum that brought together state representatives, private industry leaders, academics, consulting firms, and other stakeholders to discuss and plan for the future of data governance. The meeting featured presentations from ROSA staff, the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC), EPI Group, the Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems (NERACOOS), the New Jersey Research & Monitoring Initiative, INSPIRE Environmental, and the Data Patch. Four of these ROSA partners participated in a panel about lessons learned from data sharing. Attendees were invited to participate in two small group discussions throughout the day about the potential applications of Ocean Biodiversity Information System (OBIS) and Darwin Core (DwC), a data standard, to fisheries monitoring data as well as small group discussions about prioritizing the next steps for integrated fishing gear datasets.

Context and Participation

The meeting began with an overview of data governance by Mike Pol, Research Director at ROSA. He defined the typical offshore wind (OSW) fisheries monitoring plan data lifecycle, mapped the fisheries monitoring data ecosystem, and emphasized the value of regional fisheries monitoring data across different lease areas. Patrick Field, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), then conducted a poll to gather information on participants' affiliations, regions of work, and daily interaction with data. The outcomes of the introductory poll and all other polling activities are in the appendix of this document. It was recognized that the shutdown of the Federal Government resulted in no participation from Federal partners. Mike Pol also provided background on the ROSA Data Governance Program, detailing its inception, objectives, and significant accomplishments. These milestones include convening joint data governance coordination meetings and gear-specific committees, developing pre- and post-award Data Management & Sharing Plans (DMSP), hosting Darwin Core (DwC) workshops, and in particular recommendations for data collected using fishing gear (e.g., trawls, traps, pots, nets). He also noted that a Benthic Image Work Group is currently in progress.

Regional Data Coordination

Emily Shumchenia, Director of the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC),emphasized the critical need for regional research and data coordination, citing benefits such as enhancing research efficiency, avoiding duplication of efforts and stakeholder fatigue, and enabling data to inform other projects. She noted the recent growth in state offshore research and stressed that coordination remains vital, even amidst shifting funding landscapes. Emily outlined initiatives proposed to promote data interoperability and highlighted how ROSA and RWSC have been advancing the recommendations. ROSA and RWSC are hosting monthly meetings to monitor offshore research solicitations and procurement, developing standard contract language, creating platforms for researchers to share progress, and streamlining information requests to developers. Emily encouraged researchers to participate in workshops and meetings to learn from one another and funders to participate in funding coordination meetings. The following comments and questions were raised by participants. Responses from ROSA and presenters are italicized:

- I appreciate the recognition that data management requires both time and funding. It is important work that should not be an afterthought. Thank you RWSC and ROSA for requiring data management plans in your RFPs.
- What role do universities play in the meta work of coordinating research and is this level of coordination relatively new?
  ROSA: ROSA's organizational structure has a group of research advisors. That is where our academic partners provide peer review of processes and specific input.
  RWSC: RWSC has expert subcommittees that are each focused on a different species group that is the primary venue for researchers to give their input. The novelty of right now is the scale of investment in offshore data and offshore research which means coordination is vital.

Policies and Frameworks to Support Data Sharing

Tricia Perez, ROSA, walked through the components of ROSA's data policy designed to ensure that collected data has wide utility . Tricia also shared some highlights of the pre-award Data Sharing Management Plan (DSMP) used in ROSA's first RFP and adapted from RWSC's draft. ROSA is developing a post-award DSMP with hopes to advance standardized data governance for more data types and methodologies.

Data Standards, Darwin Core, & OBIS

Mike Pol provided an overview of the draft Fishing Gear Data recommendations related to data standards and a data repository that arose from the Fishing Gear Data Working Group. ROSA is proposing to recommend the Darwin Core (DwC) framework, a flexible data structure that meets widely-accepted standards and OBIS, a global and machine-readable data repository. Attendees were asked to break into small groups and consider the potential application and adoption of OBIS and DwC.

Below are the key takeaways from the small group discussions:

- Darwin Core is a straightforward framework that can aid in data standardization and interoperability.
- OBIS was recognized as a valuable, international, and well established platform that could enhance data availability, appropriate for broad use.
- Participants sought clarification on which projects are well suited for DwC and OBIS, and limitations of both tools.
- State agency representatives can influence data standards through solicitations and research funding. There was interest in developing specific language that could be used in contracts to require data management standards for funded projects.
- Researchers and consultants may not easily adopt these standards due to the time and money required to go back and convert existing and older data that was not originally collected using DwC standards. There is a need for resources and guidance to support the conversion of existing data to the new standards.
- Concerns were expressed about restricting access to data and the potential for the misinterpretation or misuse of publicly shared data and further clarity on what types of projects that are amenable to these standards.

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP)

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) has standardized fishery-dependent data across states. To share how the organization potentially connects to this broader regional monitoring ecosystem related to offshore development, Reneé Reilly, ROSA, presented on behalf ofGeoff White, ACCSP. Renee shared how data standards support fisheries management through a recent ACCSP example. The new private recreational tilefish fishery reporting requirements for the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council were designed to improve species management through better catch and effort data to support dockside interviews. Reneé explained that through ACCSP's identification of key data elements, private recreational angler data can now be collected via a number of different online applications, and still meet the rigorous standards needed for use in future stock assessments. This case demonstrated the need for data standardization at all levels, along with clear, consistent guidance, and data fields that capture the most essential information.

Panel Discussion

ROSA invited a panel of varied perspectives to share virtues and examples of data sharing as it relates to their work. Brian Gervelis, INSPIRE Environmental, Colleen Brust, New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection, Tom Shyka, Northeastern Regional Association Of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems, and Steve Formel, The Data Patch, shared data governance examples drawn from their work.

Brian Gervelis discussed a 2021 initiative to establish an acoustic highly migratory fish species telemetry data sharing agreement among offshore wind developers. Starting with a survey, a draft agreement defining goals and stipulations was created by 2023. By Fall 2024, nearly all developers agreed to share data via the ACT Network/MATOS. Brian noted ongoing consistency issues due to changes in developer's

participation and a mixture of data that adheres and strays from the agreement being analyzed collectively.

Colleen Brust presented the New Jersey Regional Research and Monitoring Initiative (NJ RMI) and its goals. The state's second and third solicitations mandated that projects commit funds exclusively to New Jersey research and monitoring. Colleen emphasized the state's responsibility and opportunity to maximize research impact by making data easily available and shareable across studies. She noted ROSA's data management efforts are vital for expanded, cross-sector collaboration, despite ongoing challenges with coordination time, required expertise, and establishing a common data language.

Tom Shyka presented the data management practices and standards that enabled the Integrated Ocean Observation System (IOOS) to function across regions. The IOOS program encompasses 17 federal organizations and operates across 11 regions and supports a variety of marine life observing programs including species observations. Tom highlighted that the system is compatible with Darwin Core, OBIS, Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), and NOAA's ERDDAP, a data server that provides a simple, consistent way to download subsets of scientific datasets in common file formats.

Tom was asked if these systems need to be revisited or if they run automatically.

> *Tom Shyka: They require care and maintenance, the tools evolve as do the needs. ERDDAP is now cloud based. There's lots of upfront work through a community development process, a lot of bringing data up to date to be consistent with standards, but then there's a lot of work on-going to maintain, update, and upgrade the systems.*

Steve Formel discussed the advantages of implementing data standards. Steve accredited some challenges with data standardization to the newness of the data tools and rate of human error. He emphasized that establishing common formats and definitions through these standards leads to greater data reliability, comparability, and a reduction in errors. Steve pointed out that the objective is to lay the strong foundation for informed analysis, policy, and management decisions by ensuring the creation and dissemination of high-quality, interoperable data.

Oceanic Environmental Data Strategy Workshop

Sarah Courbis, EPI Group, shared information on an Oceantic's June 2025 workshop designed to develop actionable strategies for environmental data sharing and implementable pilot approaches. The workshop focused on three data streams: protected species observer data, benthic visual imagery data, and oceanographic data. Key conclusions emphasized that the standardization process will take time and require incremental actions, while long-term maintenance of these systems will depend on sustained funding. Sarah noted that the developer's interest in long term cost savings could be met by increased investment in standardization. A final report will be available from this effort in the coming months.

Next Steps for Regional Data Sharing

Tricia Perez, ROSA, presented an overview of the FishFORWRD tool and research gaps analysis. Attendees broke into small groups and were asked to:

- Consider regional questions that could be pursued with integrated fishing gear data and the methodology to answer key questions
- Prioritize questions to address in the near future
- Provide feedback on the ROSA Data Governance process and its recommendations.

Below are key takeaways from the small group discussions:
- It is important to think about the Data Management Plan lifecycle as a dynamic process rather than a one-time event .
- A significant challenge is that folks are often working in silos even within the same project. The key question becomes how to get everyone on board at every level to adopt the data standard and who can lead and assist people through the process.
- We need a data standard, the question remains which one.
- Need to understand the effect of federal trawl surveys being displaced and what are alternatives to fill those gaps
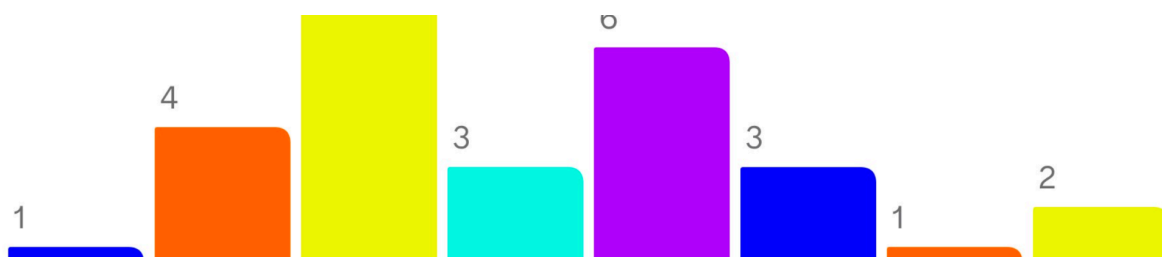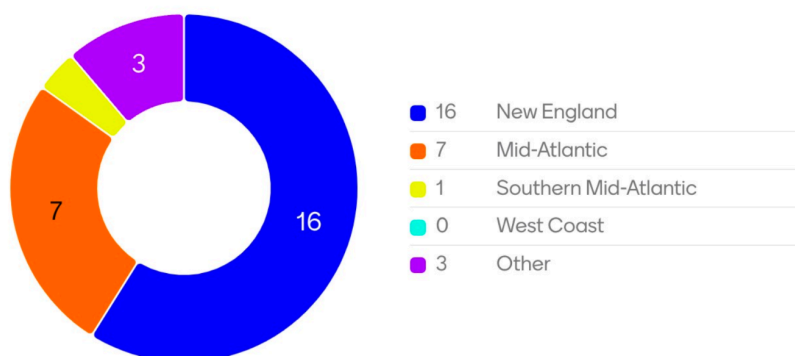
Overall Take-Aways
- ROSA's data governance work is critically necessary and must continue to work to develop data standards.
- Darwin Core and OBIS were recognized as straightforward, helpful, valuable and appropriate.
- Further directions include continuing to work on understanding steps needed to develop wider data sharing, including establishing contract language and working one-on-one with data owners.
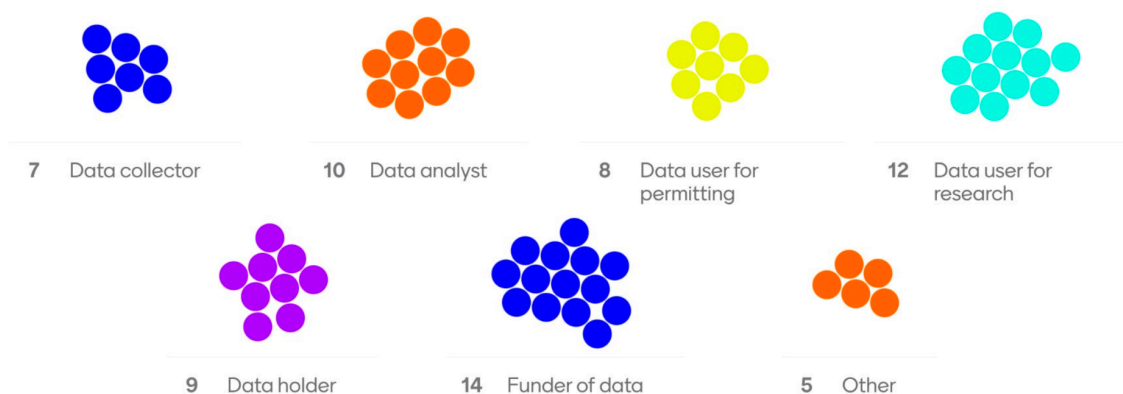
Opening Polling Results

My most common role in data governance is . . . (pick up to 3)

- **7** Data collector
- **10** Data analyst
- **8** Data user for permitting
- **12** Data user for research
- **9** Data holder
- **14** Funder of data
- **5** Other

In one word , data governance for fisheries data is . . .

achievable
challenging
important
underfunded
complex essential critical
necessary
standardized complicated problematic
evolving overdue difficult
needed exciting
imminent