



# Toward an Ocean Vision for the Nantucket Shelf Region

## Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, Provincetown, MA

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, the Pew Ocean Commission and the Massachusetts Ocean Management Task Force have all called for better management and protection of America's coastal and ocean waters. As part of its Coastal Solutions Initiative, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies commissioned a scientific literature review of the southern New England shelf. The goal of the review was to identify important ecological features of the region and to provide recommendations concerning ocean management.

The Horsley Witten Group, Inc. (HW) conducted the scientific literature review and synthesis and identified an area, called the Nantucket Shelf Region, which encompasses Nantucket Sound, Vineyard Sound, Georges Bank, the Great South Channel and the southern New England shelf. This area has extremely dynamic ocean circulation, high current speeds, shallow water depths that preclude shipping in many areas, an ecological transition zone between southern and northern species, important habitat for commercially and recreationally important fish and shellfish, high productivity and critical habitat for waterbirds and endangered marine mammals such as the North Atlantic Right Whale.

This area is also extremely popular for recreational boating, commercial fishing and shellfishing and coastal tourism and development. Management issues include potential water quality impacts from coastal development and boating, potential offshore oil and gas mining in Georges Bank, fisheries management and other uses and activities.

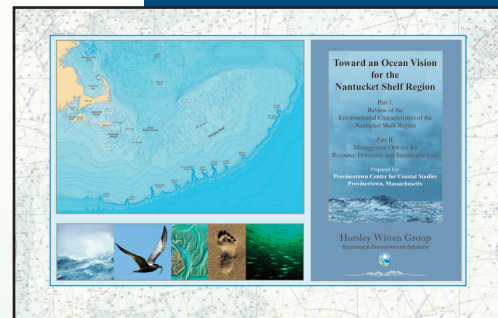
HW developed a report describing these features and recommending that a Nantucket Shelf Regional Committee be set up to develop a long-term ocean management plan for the Nantucket Shelf Region. The plan should consider ocean zoning as a means of managing sustainable uses, while living resources should be protected based on the principles of ecosystem-based management. The report can be downloaded from the PCCS website at: <http://www.coastalstudies.org>.

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