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Developing Federal Maritime Zones and Boundaries: History and State of the Art

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Abstract: With a greater shift toward conserving and managing our resources, more restrictions are placed on ocean activities. Predictability in locating the bounds of a particular regulatory area will help with compliance and improve enforcement. The United States, pursuant to international law, has established maritime zones in which various activities are controlled or restricted. The limits of these zones, among a host of other information, have for years been depicted on NOAA's paper nautical charts. NOAA is responsible for depicting on its nautical charts the limits of the 12 nautical mile Territorial Sea, 24 nautical mile Contiguous Zone, and 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Additionally, NOAA also charts a Three Nautical Mile Line and a Natural Resources Boundary at 9 nautical miles, which may serve as the inner limit of federal fisheries jurisdiction as well as the outer limit of the states' jurisdiction for certain laws. This paper details an ongoing project to create a digital national baseline and maritime zones in accordance with articles set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to provide digital versions of the maritime limits to the public.

Speaker Information: Meredith Westington serves as the Chief Geographer for NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, where she is recognized as a leading expert on U.S. maritime zones and boundaries. She is also a contributor to a 66-page handbook on *Marine Managed Areas: Best Practices for Boundary Making*, which was published in June 2006 by the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Marine Boundary Working Group, a group comprised of skilled professionals across federal and state government. In addition, Ms. Westington represents the Department of Commerce on the U.S. Board of Geographic Names. Prior to starting at NOAA in 1999, Meredith graduated from Virginia Tech with a geology degree and worked at sea as a Navigator for an oil exploration company.