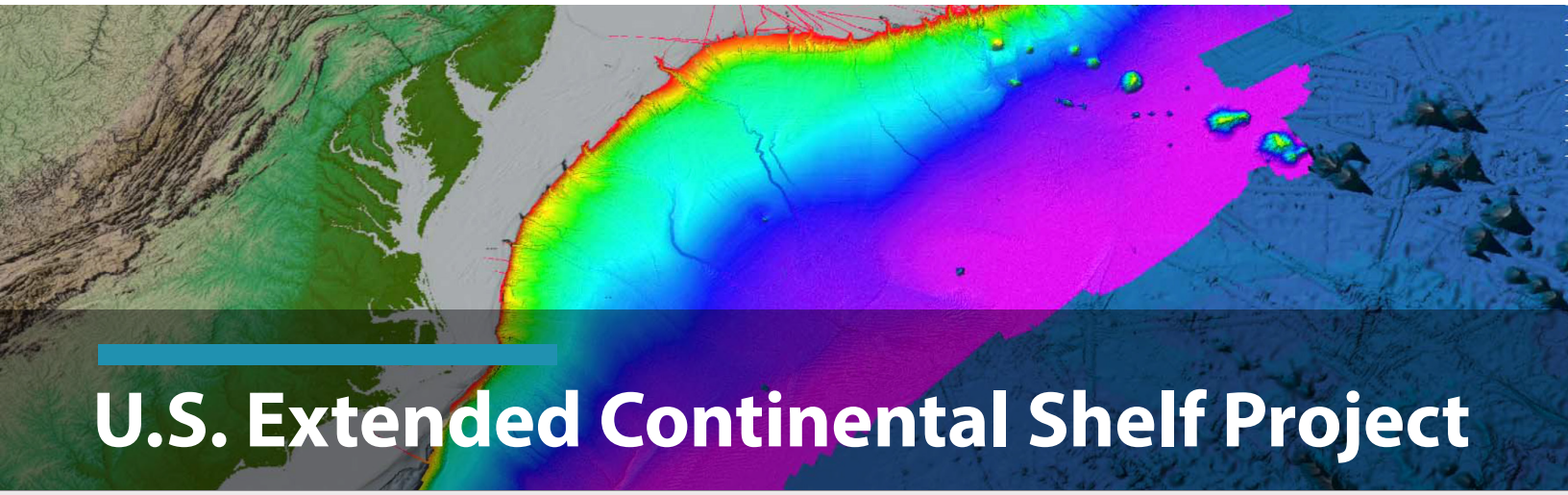
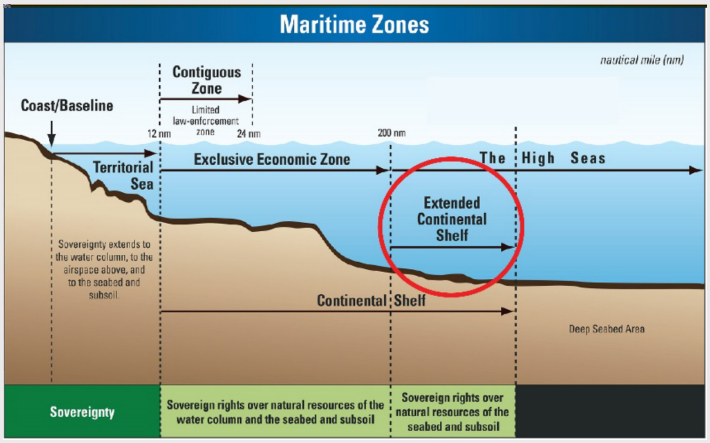


U.S. Extended Continental Shelf Project

What is the ECS?

The continental shelf is the submerged prolongation of a coastal nation's land territory. The Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) is that portion of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from shore. The U.S. ECS is an important maritime zone that holds many resources and vital habitats for marine life.



Why is ECS important?

Knowledge of the exact extent of the U.S. ECS and an improved understanding of its natural resources will enhance stewardship and promote economic prosperity. Defining those limits in concrete geographical terms provides the specificity and certainty necessary to protect, manage, and use the resources of the ECS.

How are ECS limits determined?

The rules for defining the outer limits of the ECS come from Article 76 of the Law of the Sea Convention. These rules require the collection and analysis of data that describe the depth, shape, and geophysical characteristics of the seabed and its subsoil. Since 2003, U.S. agencies have been engaged in gathering and analyzing those data to determine the outer limits of the U.S. ECS.

Where is U.S. ECS?

The United States has ECS in several offshore areas, including in the Arctic Ocean north of Alaska, the Atlantic East Coast, the Bering Sea, Pacific West Coast, and the Gulf of Mexico. The U.S. ECS is at least one million square kilometers, an area about twice the size of California or about half the size of the Louisiana Purchase.

Who is determining the extent of U.S. ECS?

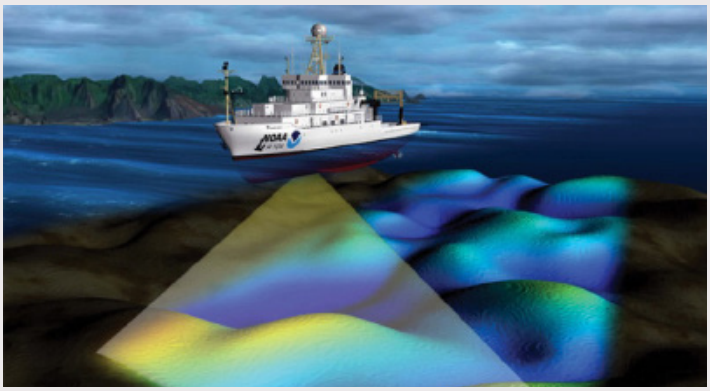
The work to delineate the U.S. extended continental shelf (ECS) is coordinated by the ECS Task Force, an interagency body of the U.S. Government. The ECS Task Force is responsible for coordinating the collection and analysis of all relevant data and preparing the necessary documentation to establish the outer limits of the U.S. ECS in accordance with international law.

The Department of State, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and NOAA are the agencies that handle the majority of the work of the ECS Project. The Department of State chairs the Task Force, leads the ECS Project Office, and manages the project's diplomatic and legal aspects. USGS leads the effort to collect, process, and interpret the seismic data. NOAA leads the effort to collect, process, and analyze the bathymetric data.

USGS science for a changing world

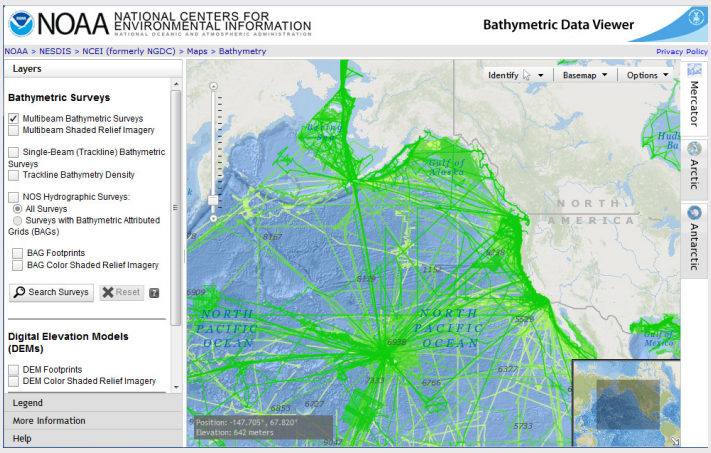
NOAA's Role

Collect, Process, and Analyze Bathymetric Data



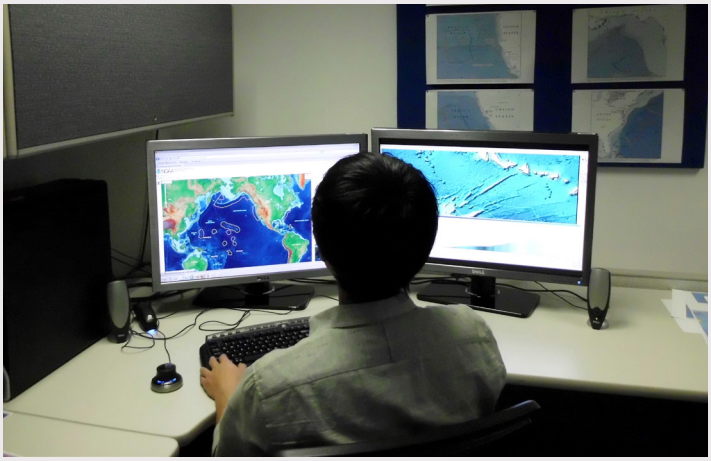
Since 2003, NOAA has mapped more than three million square kilometers of the ocean floor, an area larger than Alaska, California, and Texas combined. These bathymetric data were collected on thirty five cruises in ten offshore regions totaling nearly two-and-a-half years of sea time. This is the largest offshore mapping effort by the United States ever conducted. The data collection is coordinated by NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research and undertaken by the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping/Joint Hydrographic Center (CCOM/JHC), a cooperative partnership between NOAA and the University of New Hampshire.

Manage, Provide Access to, and Archive the Data



NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) serves as the archival location for all data and products related to the ECS Project. NCEI provides access to data for the ECS team and to the public via our data viewers and project data access page (https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/ecs/cruises.html). The effort to make ECS data available to the public also supports the National Ocean Policy and NOAA objectives to improve planning, inform science, and reduce the costs of acquiring expensive data.

Host the ECS Project Office



NOAA hosts the U.S. ECS Project Office at NCEI in Boulder, Colorado. The office is staffed with ten experts from the Department of State, NOAA, and the University of Colorado. Their mission is to produce consistent and compelling documentation and compile the necessary data to establish the outer limits of the U.S. extended continental shelf.