The National Effort to Establish the Full Extent of the Continental Shelf of the United States

U.S. Extended Continental Shelf Project

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A Strategic Plan produced by the U.S. Extended Continental Shelf Task Force

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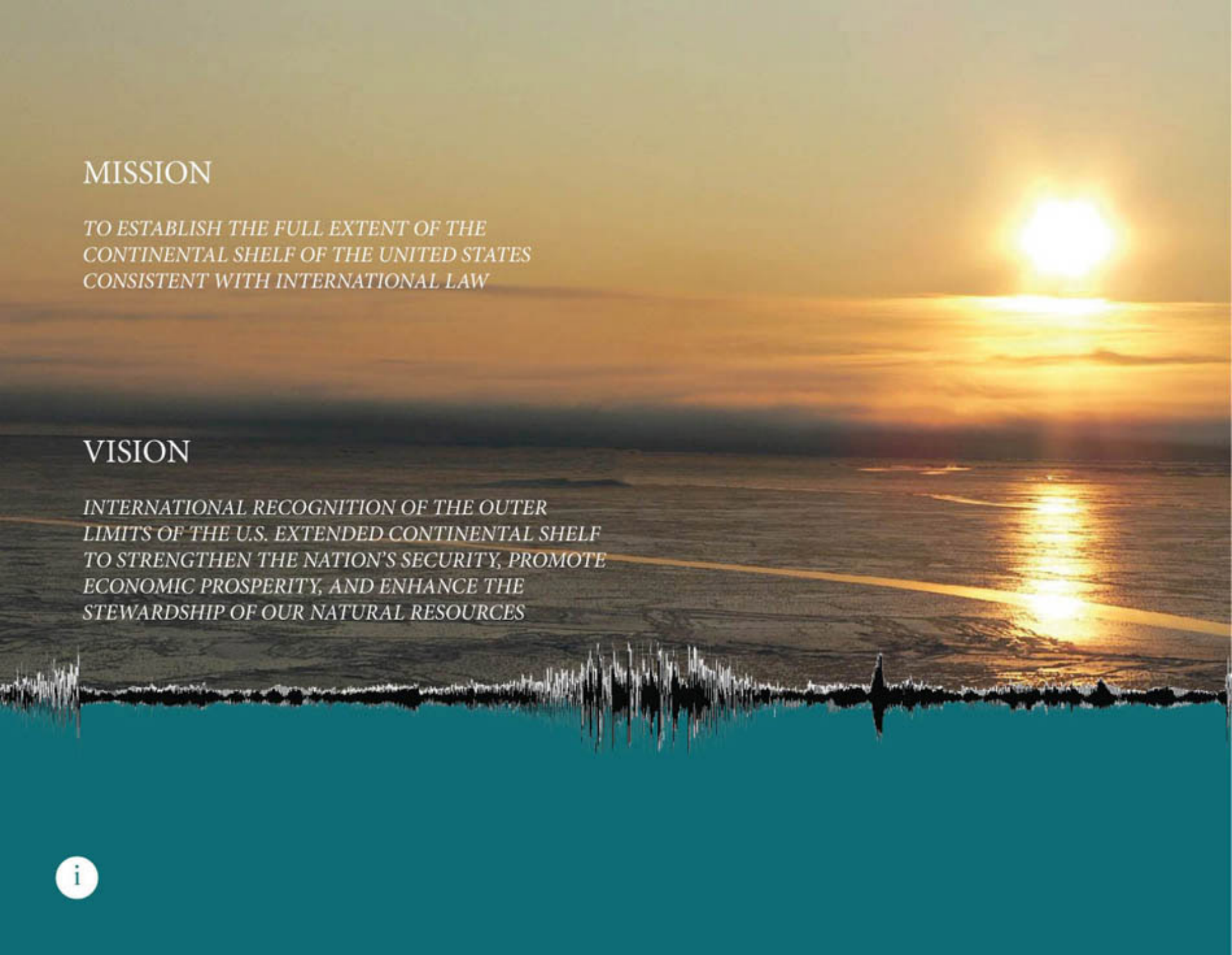

MISSION

TO ESTABLISH THE FULL EXTENT OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF OF THE UNITED STATES CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW

VISION

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE OUTER LIMITS OF THE U.S. EXTENDED CONTINENTAL SHELF TO STRENGTHEN THE NATION'S SECURITY, PROMOTE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, AND ENHANCE THE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

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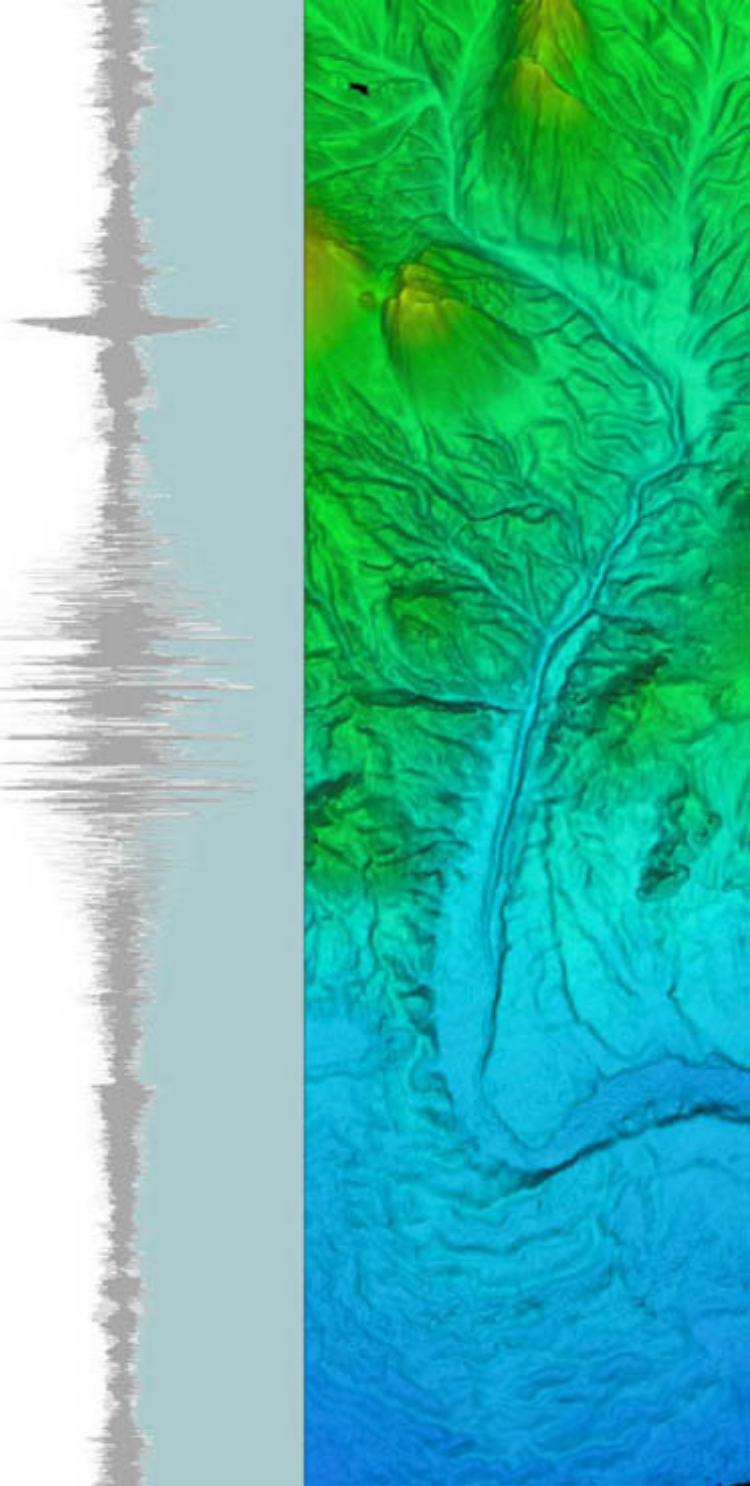
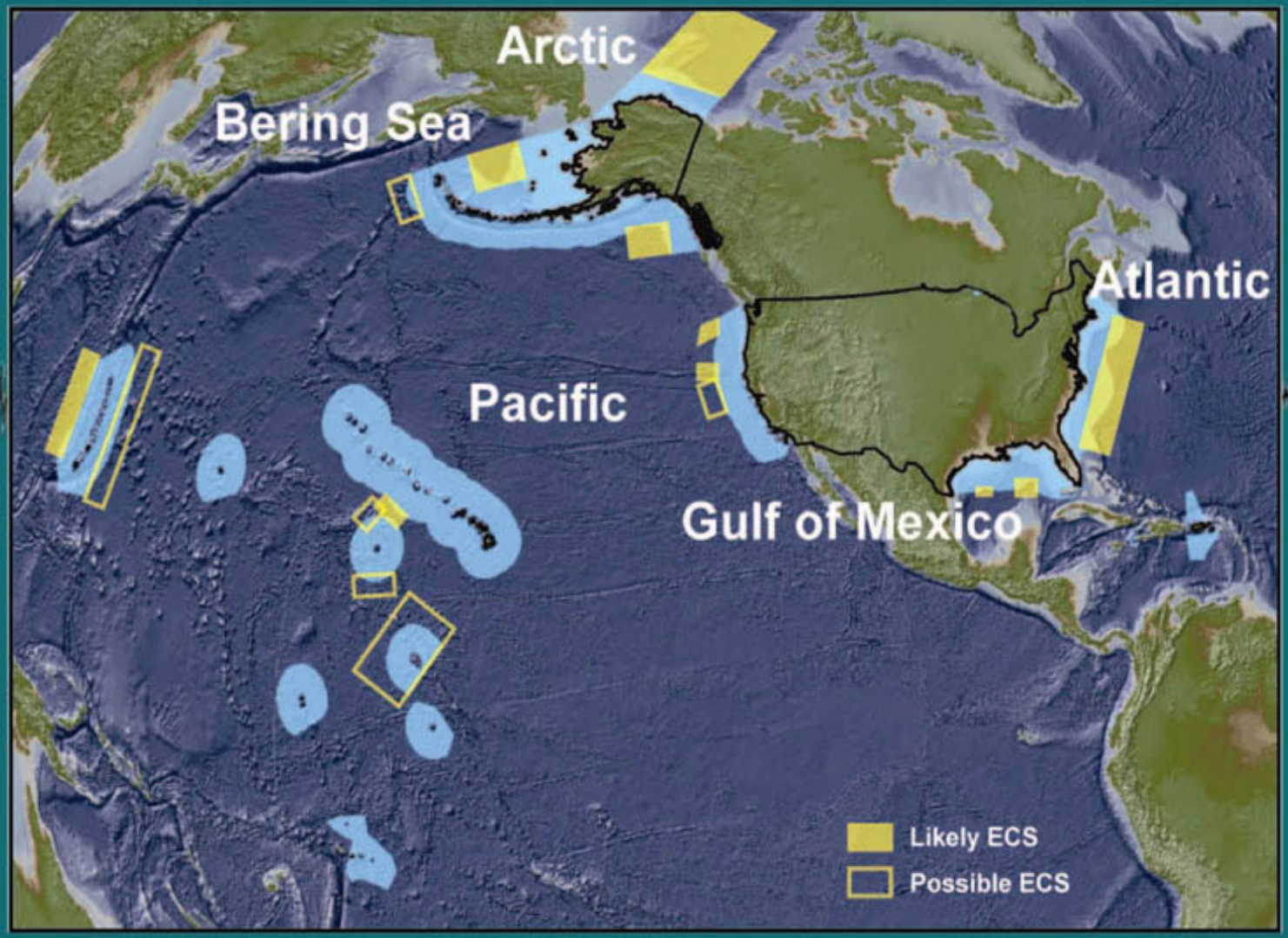




The Opportunity

Areas with potential for a U.S. ECS include: the Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Bering Sea, and some regions in the Pacific Ocean. The ECS Task Force is undertaking in-depth analyses to ensure the U.S. defines the maximum shelf consistent with international law. This map shows potential ECS areas (in yellow). Areas in blue are the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones of the U.S.

Defining the Seaward Extent of U.S. Rights

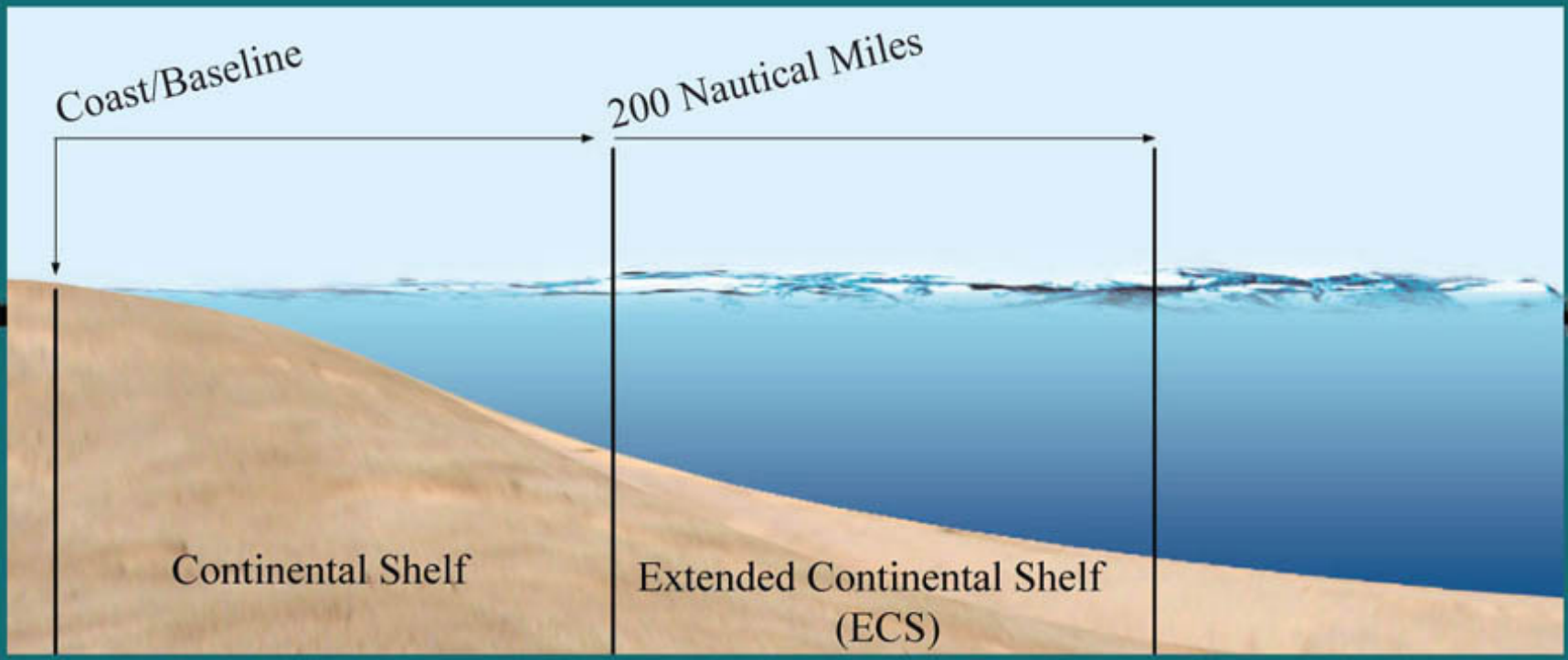
The United States has an extended continental shelf (ECS) that is more than one million square kilometers – an area nearly half that of the Louisiana Purchase – with energy and mineral resources that are likely worth many billions of U.S. dollars. Defining and establishing the limits of the ECS in concrete geographical terms would enable the U.S. to exercise its sovereign rights with significantly greater certainty.

Background

Under international law, as reflected in the Convention on the Law of the Sea, every coastal State automatically has a continental shelf out to 200 nautical miles (nm) from its coastal baselines, or out to a maritime boundary with another coastal State. However, a coastal State may define a continental shelf beyond 200 nm (called an extended continental shelf), if it meets the criteria outlined in Article 76 of the Convention. The process requires the collection and analysis of data that documents the natural prolongation of the continental landmass beyond 200 nm as determined by the formulae and limit lines in Article 76.

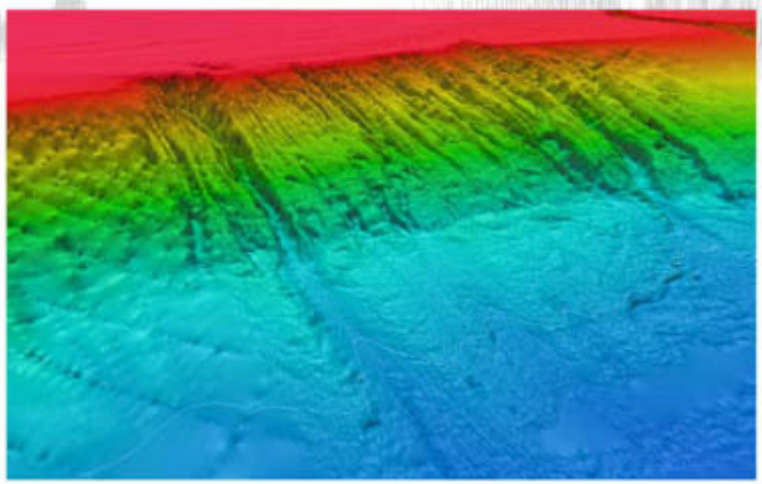
Why does defining the seaward extent of U.S. rights matter?

The U.S., like other countries, has an inherent interest in knowing, and declaring to others, the exact extent of our sovereign rights in the ocean. Specifically, a nation has sovereign rights over the resources on and under the seabed, including petroleum resources (oil, gas, gas hydrates), "sedentary" creatures such as clams, crabs, and corals, and mineral resources, such as manganese nodules, ferromanganese crusts, and polymetallic sulfides. Defining those rights in concrete geographical terms provides the specificity and certainty necessary to protect or use those resources.



Sovereign rights over the ECS include:

- Exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil of the continental shelf, such as petroleum resources (oil, gas, gas hydrates), and mineral resources (manganese nodules, ferromanganese crusts, and polymetallic sulfides)
- Exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of living "sedentary" resources, such as clams, crabs, scallops, sponges, corals, and mollusks
- Control over marine scientific research
- Control over the construction, operation, and use of artificial islands, installations, and structures
- Control over the delineation of the course for laying pipelines
- Regulation of drilling and mining
- Control and prevention of marine pollution in connection with certain activities on the ECS

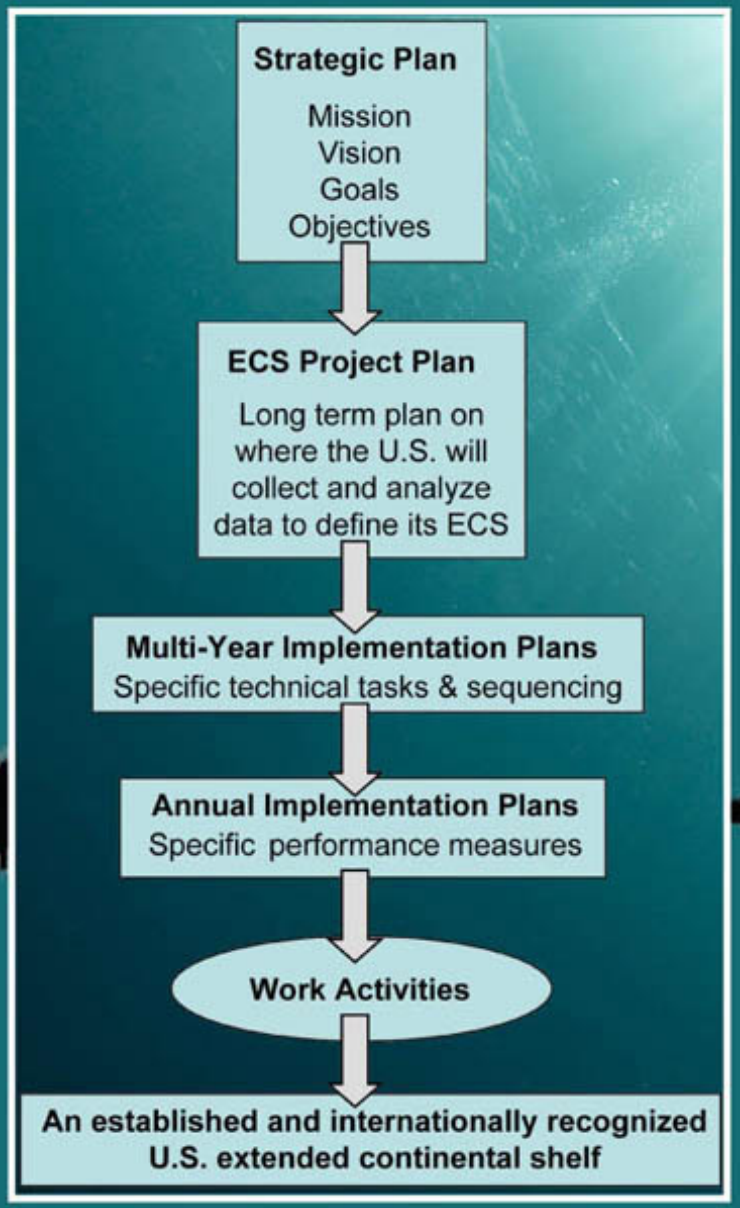


Strategic Framework

This Strategic Plan is a guide for the decade-or-more U.S. ECS Project. It is a touchstone providing consistency and connecting all of the major components, diverse participants and stakeholders, and technical, policy, and management developments over the entire extent of the Project. It identifies a series of Strategic Goals that will help facilitate the acquisition and coordination of necessary resources. It also outlines project oversight, management, and production in an integrated manner that ties activities to common goals. The framework seeks to maintain the flexibility necessary to balance priorities and resources and for adapting to changes in technological capabilities and diplomatic needs. This Strategic Plan emphasizes the critical need for partnerships, diligent monitoring, and the reassessment of ongoing and pending activities - technically, administratively, and fiscally. Fundamentally, it is a guide and a road map for decision-making as new knowledge and information about the potential extent of the U.S. ECS is gained.

Implementing the Plan

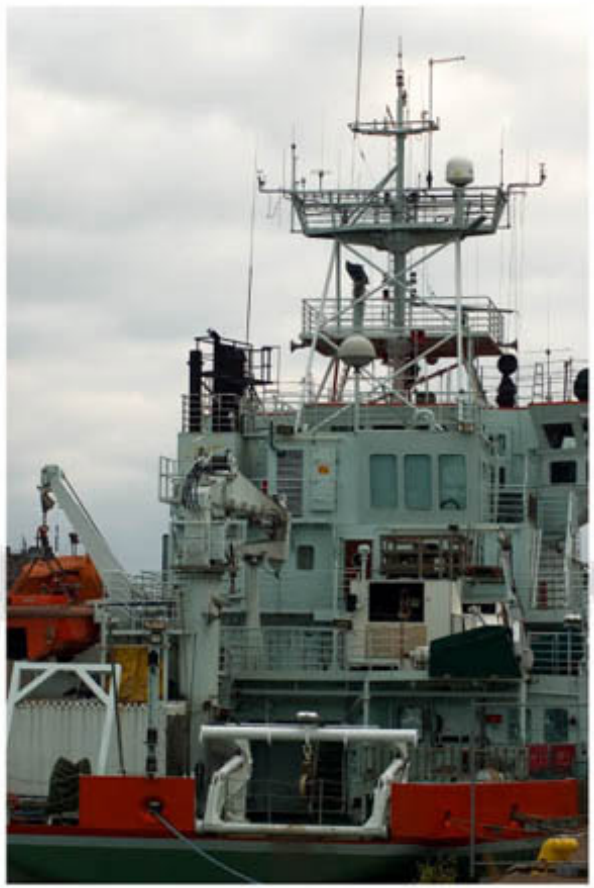
This Strategic Plan does not stipulate specific participant actions or budgets, or provide specific timelines for activities. Such details will be addressed in a series of companion documents. The ECS Project Plan will outline discrete technical components and tasks; annual and multi-year implementation plans will outline how specific fiscal year resources will be obligated and how activities and policies spanning multiple years will be coordinated and executed, respectively. These companion documents will link each specific component and task back to one or more strategic goals and objectives and specify the performance metrics and any course corrections necessary to ensure success.



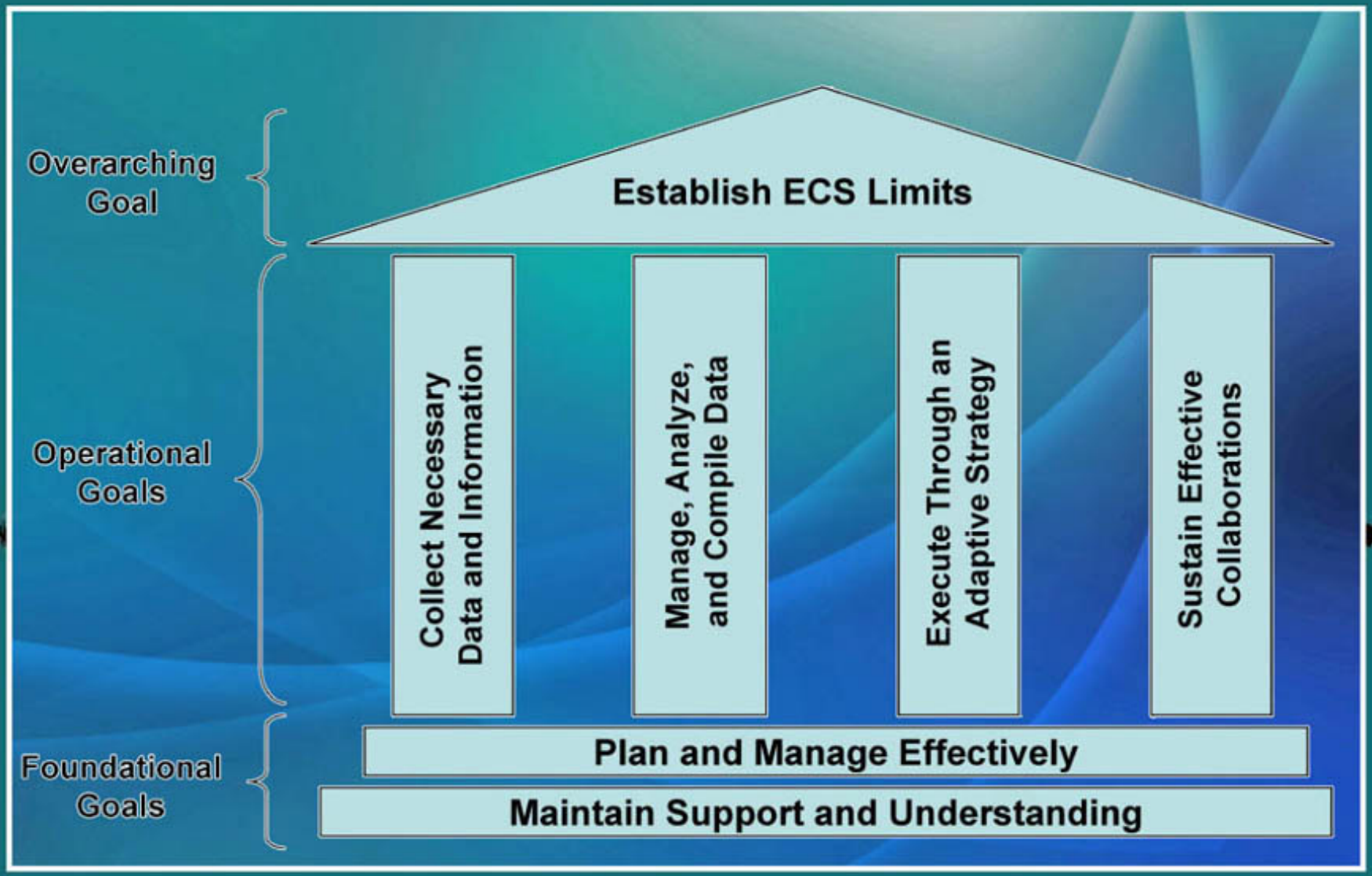
Goals

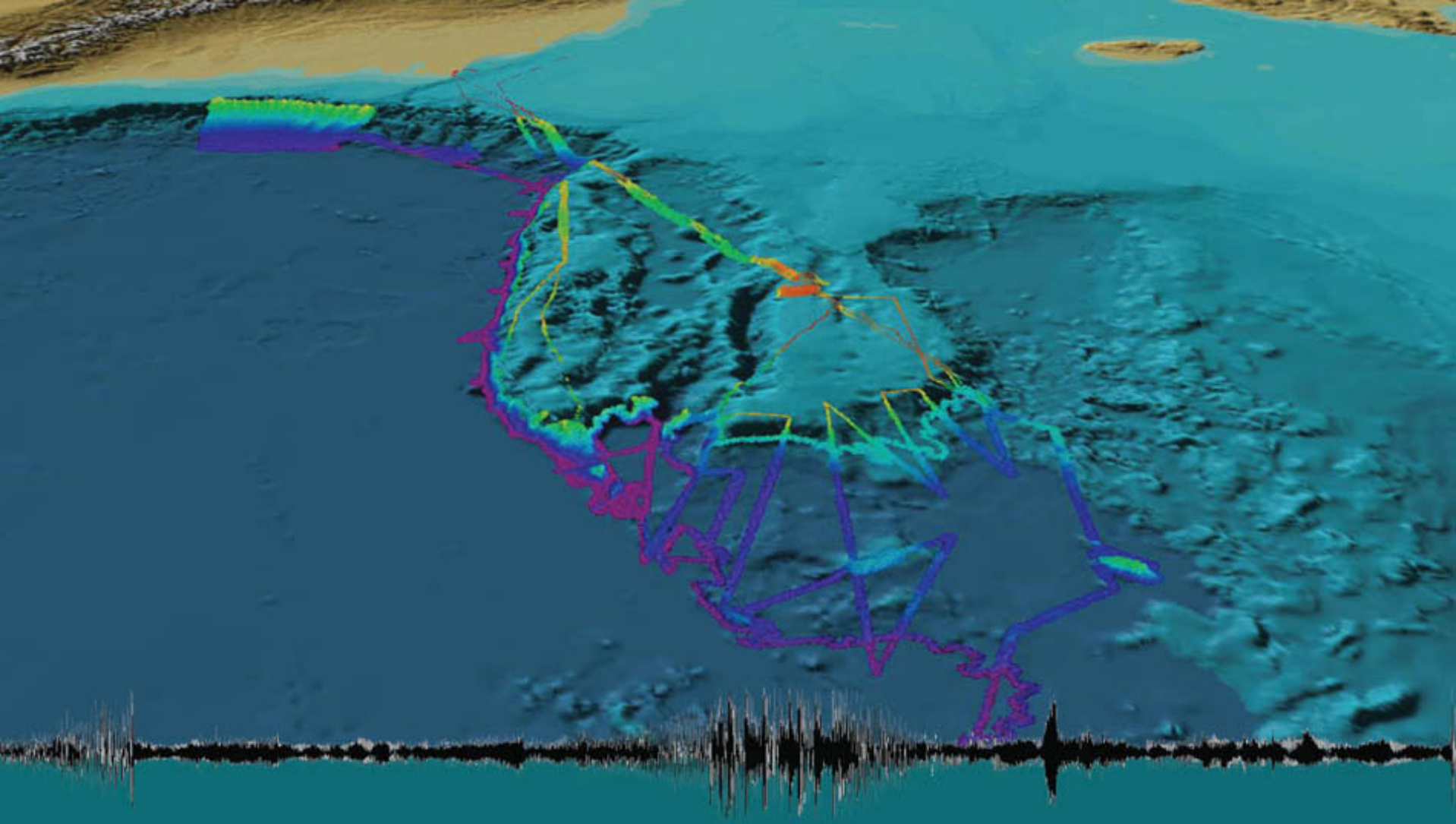
Strategic goals have concise definitions and component objectives. While they are not likely to change throughout the extent of the Project, new objectives may emerge and existing ones may need to be revised. Thus, to maintain relevance and provide continued guidance, this Strategic Plan is considered a living, flexible document.

The overarching goal is to ensure the delivery of the final products and results necessary to fulfill the mission. Operational goals address collection of information, analysis and compilation of data, and the national and international coordination, cooperation, and collaboration necessary to define the full extent of the ECS. Foundational goals involve long-term planning and management to obtain the policy and financial support necessary for the entire Project to succeed.



Mission Map


Overarching Goal
Establish ECS Limits
Operational Goals
Collect Necessary Data and Information
Manage, Analyze, and Compile Data
Execute Through an Adaptive Strategy
Sustain Effective Collaborations
Foundational Goals
Plan and Manage Effectively
Maintain Support and Understanding



1.0 Establish ECS Limits

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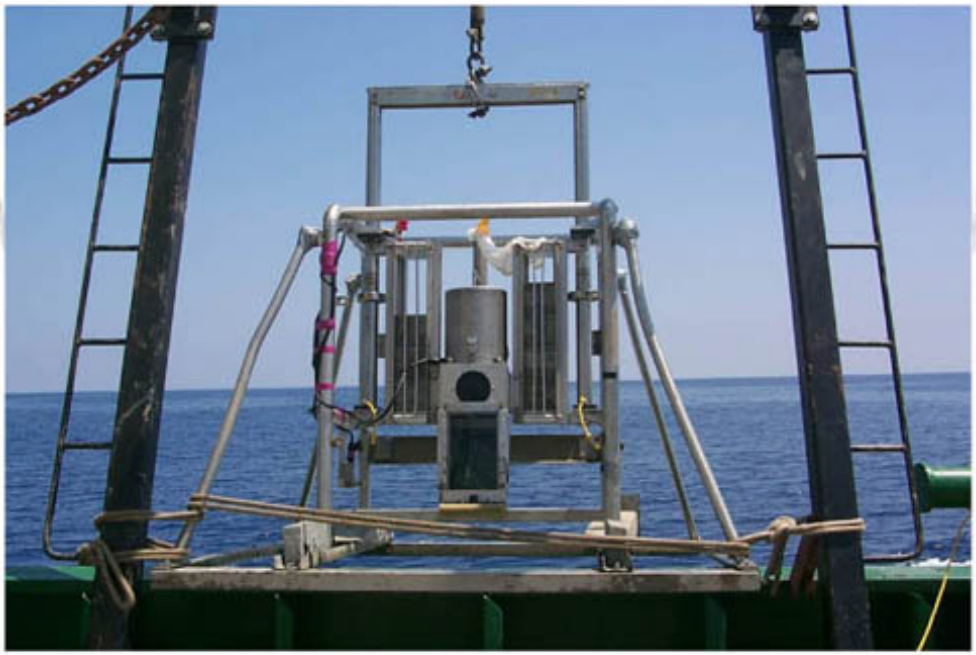
Definition: *The United States will establish the limits of its continental shelf beyond 200 nm through the presentation of data and analyses to the international community, and through the publication of materials defining the outer limits.*

Review of the ECS activities of other States demonstrates that a full decade or more of data collection and analysis is required for successful establishment of ECS limits. Continuing to commit resources and maintaining momentum is prudent and cost-effective.



2.0 Plan and Manage Effectively

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Definition: *Efficiently implement processes and procedures across federal agencies and throughout each stage of the Project.*

A clear line of management and accountability is critical at all stages of activity: from the acquisition of resources, to the performance of analyses, to the placing of lines on a map.

Objectives:

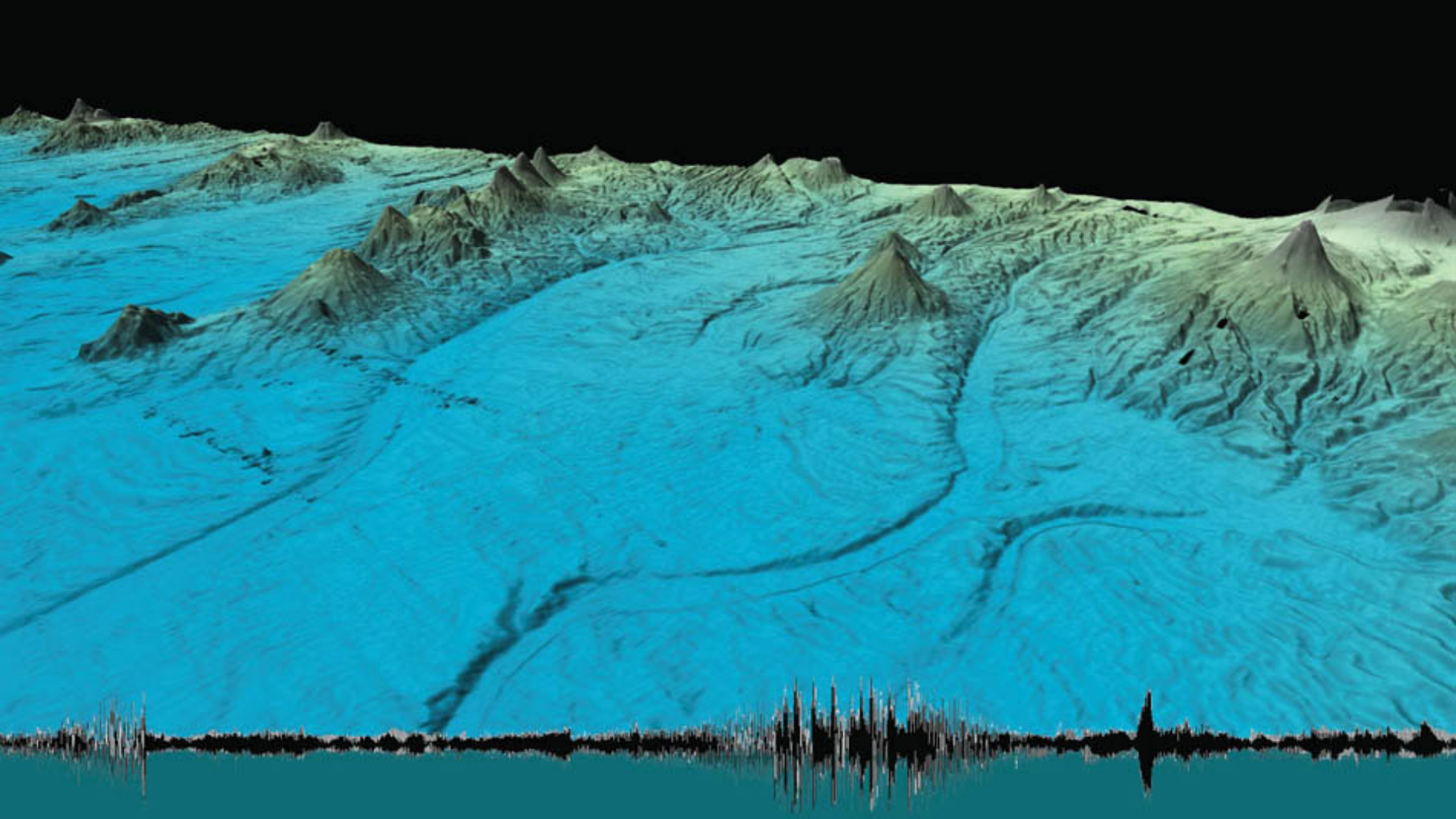
2.1 Staffing & Resources – Ensure that the resources are available over the full extent of the Project.

2.2 Prioritize Activities – Provide the guidance necessary to ensure that tasks are conducted in the most efficient sequence and accomplished on schedule.

2.3 Internal Communications – Facilitate the communication necessary to ensure the most efficient management and work processes among the many agencies involved in the Task Force.

2.4 Cyclical Monitoring and Evaluation Process – Conduct frequent and thorough reviews ensuring that work efforts and products are meeting expectations and timelines.

2.5 Risk Management – Monitor analytical, field, and policy activities for unacceptable or questionable investment efforts.



3.0 Maintain Support and Understanding

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Definition: *Build the network necessary to ensure multi-year implementation through the effective communication of goals, progress, requirements, and benefits of an extended continental shelf.*

An effective communications plan is essential for maintaining focus on Project priorities; generating and maintaining support among participants and stakeholders; and supporting a deliberative, thorough decision-making process.

Objectives:

3.1 Partnerships – Build relationships among Project participants, the academic community, and other stakeholders that facilitate completion of each task, and encourage relevant value and analysis of data and samples produced through the ECS.

3.2 Public Education – Keep the public informed as to the intent, status, and importance of the ECS Project.

3.3 Outreach to Decision-makers – Ensure that decision-makers are provided the information necessary to make the best possible decisions.

4.0 Collect Necessary Data and Information

4.0 Collect Necessary Data and Information

Definition: *Collect data and information necessary to support legally sound, scientifically credible, and analytically robust limits.*

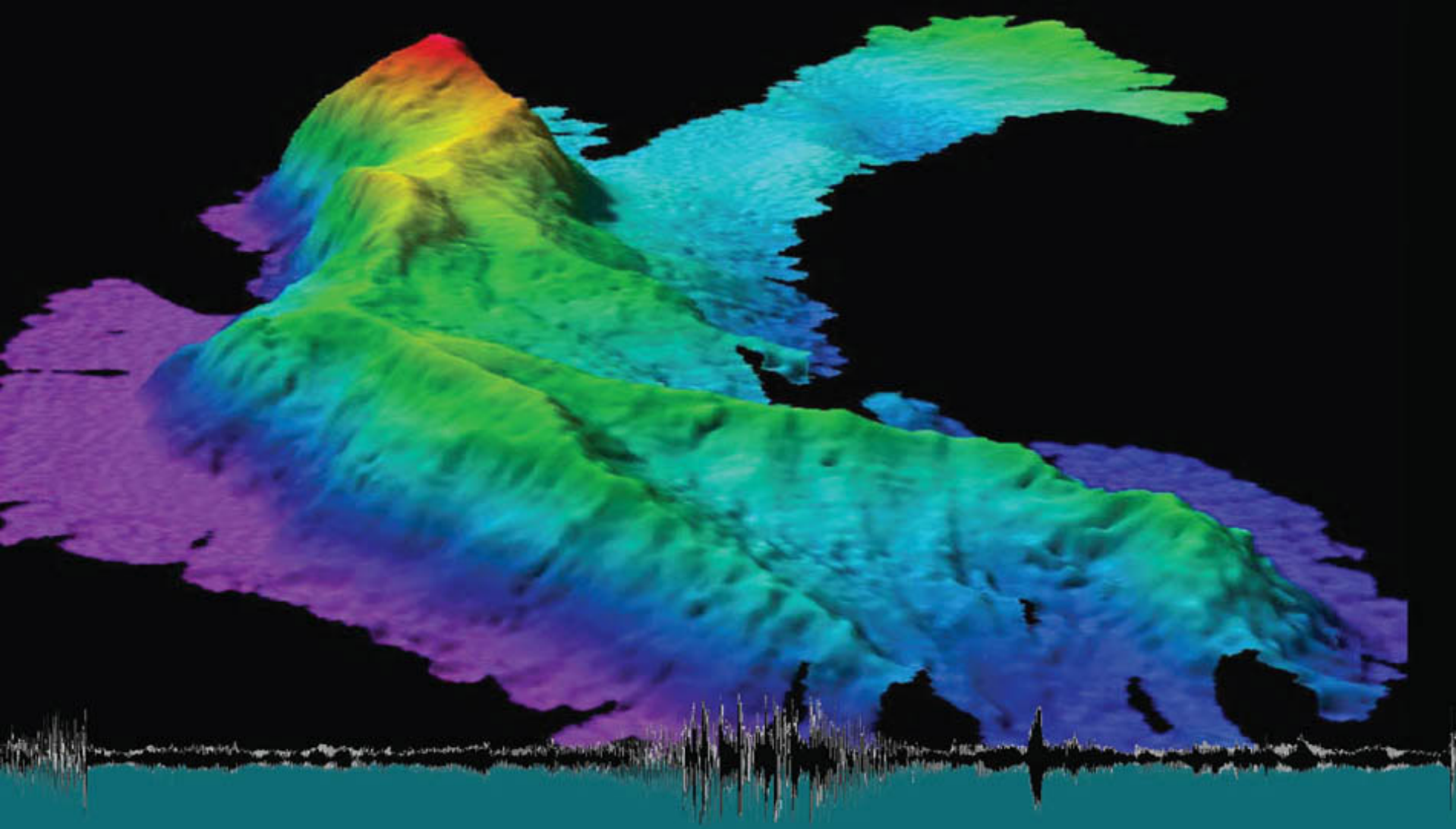
Everything within an analysis must be technically defensible: each data point must have a history and be justified with supporting scientific and legal rationale.

Objectives:

4.1 Identify Existing Data – Identify existing information pertinent to potential U.S. ECS areas.

4.2 Gap Analysis – Identify where necessary information is lacking.

4.3 Data Acquisition – Acquire any necessary additional data through field work.



5.0 Manage, Analyze, and Compile Data

5.0 Manage, Analyze, and Compile Data

Definition: *Establish the data management architecture, conduct necessary analyses, compile all relevant information, and prepare the presentation.*

Data Management is pivotal for success. It will ensure that information is preserved, remains continually accessible, and can be improved as future discoveries build understanding and knowledge.

Objectives:

5.1 Implement Data Management Practices – Establish and apply "best practices": procedures for efficient data and metadata access and use, for sample preservation and tracking, for recording all data-relevant materials, for standardizing and protecting the data used and their descriptors, and for managing data archives.

5.2 Analyze Data – Make decisions on the various elements relevant to establishment of ECS limits: foot-of-the-slope points, formula lines, and constraint lines.

5.3 Compile Data and Analyses – Prepare detailed technical information clearly describing the ECS delineation, including supporting information and complete data sets.

5.4 Prepare for Public Release – Complete materials for release to the public and the international community, which will require a team of individuals with technical, legal, policy, and outreach expertise.

6.0 Execute Through an Adaptive Strategy

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Definition: *Maintain flexibility throughout project implementation, recognizing that requirements may evolve over the life of the Project in response to data analysis, interim results, and resource availability.*

Flexibility is key: extensive analysis and re-analysis of information is expected and critical and may lead to additional data collection requirements.

Objectives:

6.1 Track and Analyze the ECS activities of other States – Establish a process whereby the efforts, products, and difficulties of other States are reviewed.

6.2 Investigate and Assess Alternative Strategies – Maintain a proactive process of seeking out improved efficiencies.

6.3 Evaluate Expert Advice and Technological Advancements – Actively seek out and exploit new processes and techniques.

6.4 Exploit Enhancement Opportunities – Monitor for, and integrate, those ongoing and planned research and assessment efforts that will strengthen the U.S. ECS effort.

6.5 Ensure Mandated Regular Technical and Policy Reviews – To ensure that new information is used, needed corrections implemented, and the results of performance metrics employed, specific periods for review of the Project will be scheduled with outcomes and actions documented.

7.0 Sustain Effective Collaborations

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Definition: *Engage with other entities in diplomatic, scientific, and collaborative efforts.*

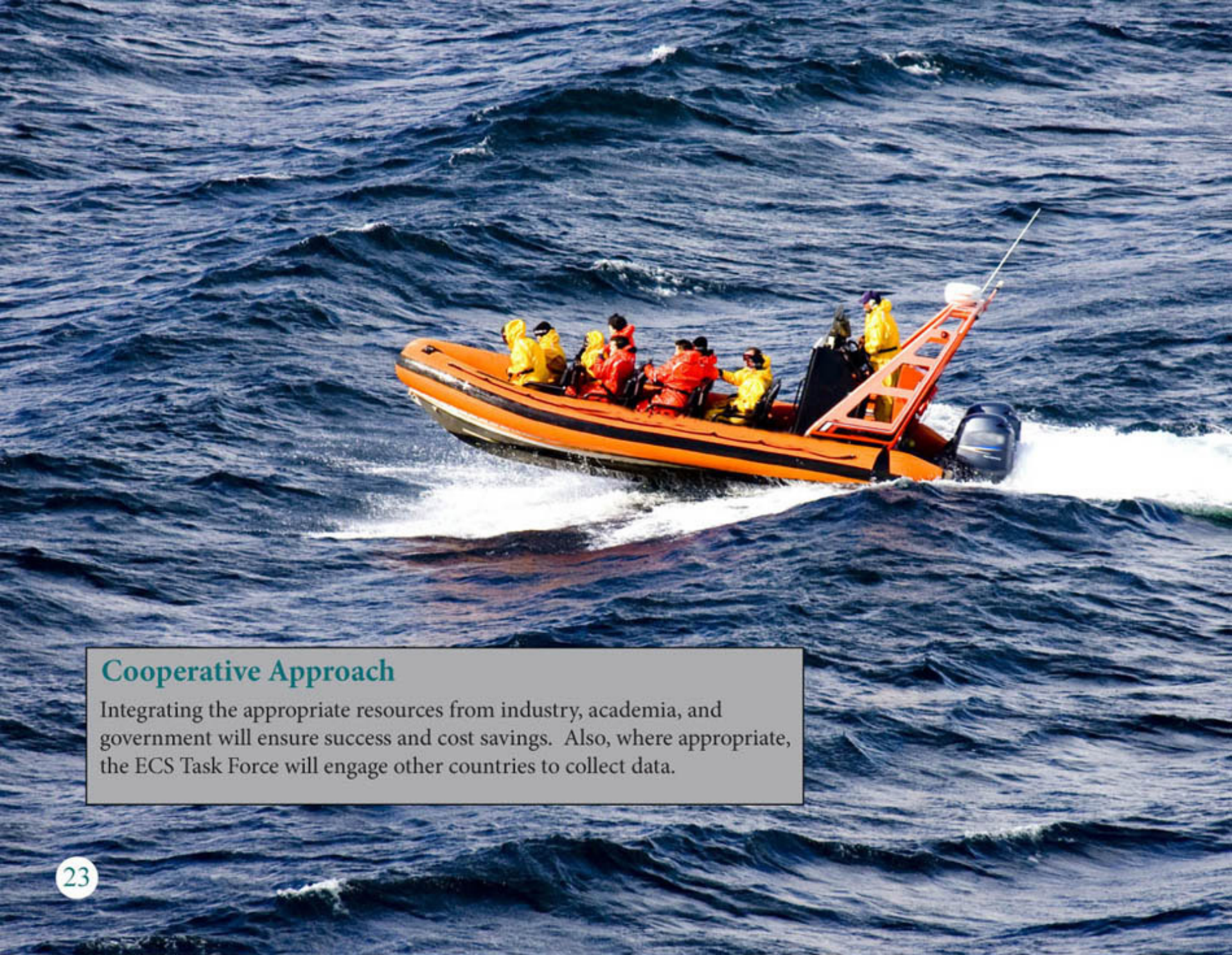
Partnerships are critical to the success of this national effort. Opportunities to leverage resources must be continually sought.

Objectives:

7.1 Scientific Collaboration – Actively promote those relationships facilitating scientific credibility.

7.2 Leverage Resources in Areas of Mutual Interest – Actively seek out those collaborative opportunities that help stretch the Project's resources.

7.3 Diplomatic Contacts – Foster international relationships that build legitimacy for establishment of the U.S. ECS.



Cooperative Approach

Integrating the appropriate resources from industry, academia, and government will ensure success and cost savings. Also, where appropriate, the ECS Task Force will engage other countries to collect data.

Strategic Oversight and Management

The ECS Project will involve a wide spectrum of decisions ranging from policy and management to resource acquisition and expenditure. These decisions will cross levels of technical and administrative boundaries and require a common focus on delivery of the final result – establishment of the full extent of the U.S. continental shelf.

Success will depend upon the integration of oversight, management, and production, as well as a clearly defined decision-making process. These techniques will ensure adequate resources, the proper sequencing of work activities, and accountability. In addition, there must be a free flow of information supporting continuous monitoring and feedback, promoting timely and effective course corrections as required.

Partnerships

Successful execution of this project will require significant communication and integration across federal agencies and across scientific, technical, legal, and policy disciplines. The nature of partnerships will encompass a continuum from an informal sharing of information among participants to a high level of interaction where common objectives are planned and implemented.

Partnership activities encompass a continuum

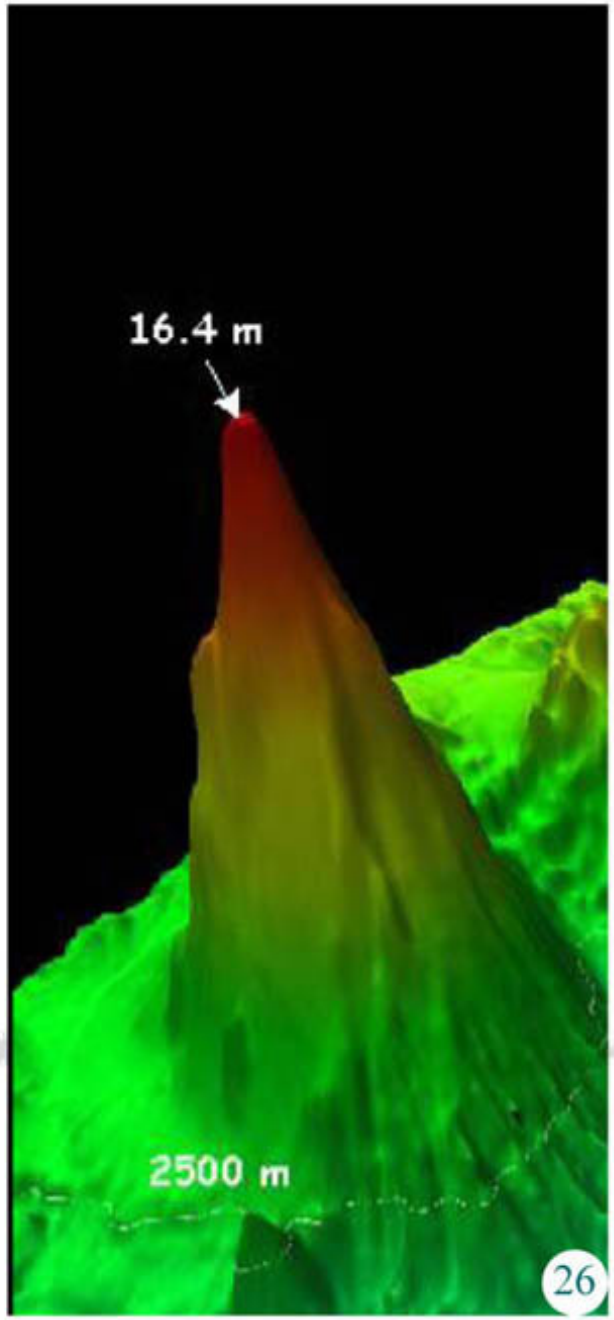
- Coordination - sharing information on similar projects
- Cooperation - working together on parallel projects with common objectives
- Collaboration - sharing objectives and working together on a common project

All efforts to address the strategic goals and objectives will be discussed collaboratively with the specific level of partnership dependent upon the need.

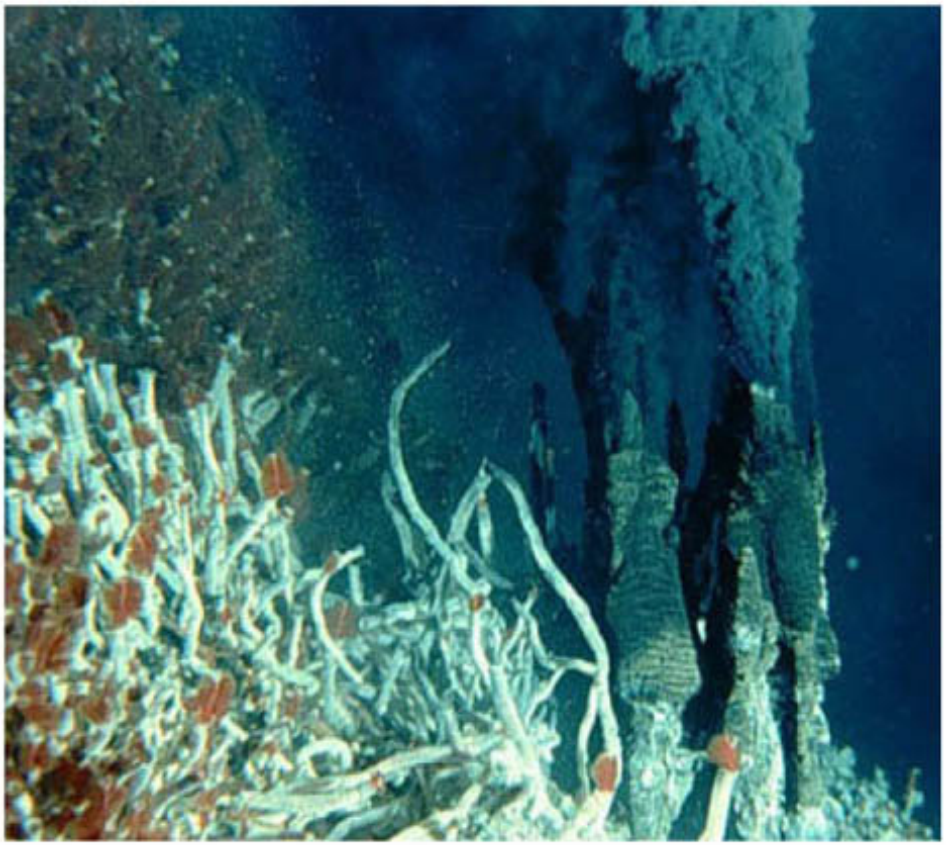
Strategic Implementation - An Iterative Process

The many component activities required to delineate our ECS will be, by their very nature, iterative. As data are analyzed, additional requirements will likely materialize. Task Force agencies should expect to adjust throughout the entire ECS Project. However, such uncertainties should be viewed as opportunities for a better use of resources; the collection of additional, complementary information; the strengthening of partnerships among participants; and opportunities for required course adjustments.

While new assets may be required to address some gaps in knowledge or to take advantage of significant technological advances, existing programs and infrastructure should be utilized whenever possible. Many of the mechanisms required to effectively address the components of the ECS Project currently exist. Agencies will capitalize on existing mechanisms to streamline implementation by preventing redundancy, helping to develop and maintain partnerships among participants, and ensuring that resources are expended to address priorities.



Other Opportunities



The Task Force will endeavor to facilitate other scientific opportunities, as appropriate, that are not directly related to defining the ECS. Interesting science aboard ECS cruises has and will continue to provide some immediate benefits. Data from cruises to the Arctic Ocean revealed scours created by past glaciers scraping along the ocean bottom, and large craters thought to be formed by gas seeps emanating from the ocean floor. One of these missions even discovered a 3,000 meter tall underwater mountain, subsequently named the Healy Seamount, that had never been mapped before! These data also provide the basic information necessary to gain better scientific insights into climate change, marine ecosystems, and hazards resulting from extreme events, such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

Tying It All Together

Moving forward with this project will involve a deliberate process to identify the policy and technical requirements and clearly connect them back to the strategic goals and objectives. This will be done through a series of subsequent companion documents to this Strategic Plan, namely the ECS Project Plan and Annual and Multi-Year Implementation Plans. The activities in these companion documents will translate back to this Strategic Plan as tasks that fall under one or more of the strategic goals.

The ECS Project Plan will specify the technical requirements and assign priorities to fulfill those requirements. It will identify individual work efforts but also define specific interagency roles and responsibilities and resource requirements.

Execution of the activities identified in the ECS Project Plan will be developed further for execution in Annual and Multi-year Implementation Plans. Annual Implementation Plans will outline ECS efforts for a single fiscal year and address such activities as specific data collection efforts, individual procurements, and analysis and documentation efforts.

Multi-year Implementation Plans will provide more generalized strategies for activities spanning several years. For example, an appropriate database infrastructure must be developed that will be relevant over several years. Similarly, education and outreach are other activities that will span multiple years.

Specific performance measures will be a critical aspect in the Annual or Multi-Year Implementation Plans. Without such metrics, it is impossible to measure progress towards desired outcomes and to make necessary course corrections in a timely manner. Each plan will also specify how the identified tasks will provide for the requisite integration – technically, administratively, and fiscally. This will be further accomplished by providing lines of responsibility and accountability for each activity and expenditure beyond what is outlined in the ECS Project Plan.

U.S. Extended Continental Shelf Project

About the U.S. ECS Task Force

The Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration (ICOSRMI), co-chaired by the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Environmental Quality, established the Extended Continental Shelf Task Force. The Task Force is chaired by the Department of State with co-vice chairs from the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The ECS Task Force is coordinating the collection and analysis of relevant data and will prepare the necessary documentation to establish the limits of the U.S. continental shelf in accordance with international law.

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