

Careers in Marine Policy and Governance

There are a variety of careers open to students who are interested in pursuing ocean or marine policy. Below, I list some employers you might consider if you are interested in working in marine governance, focusing on various levels of government. Note that a background in science is often necessary for positions in several of these offices.

1. State of Louisiana, Office of Coastal Management: <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/coastal>

The Office of Coastal Management is based out of Louisiana's Department of Natural Resources. The Office of Coastal Management is responsible for regulating the state's coastal wetlands, focusing specifically on activities that impact coastal waters. They also handle the necessary permits for coastal construction projects.

2. State of Louisiana, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries: <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/>

The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife regulates issues having to do with not just fish and wildlife but also their habitats. The goal is to promote sustainable management of Louisiana's fish resources, ensuring that fishing is regulated to avoid waste or overfishing. They provide fishing licenses and enforcement of state fishing laws.

3. NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Ocean Service: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, is the US federal agency that oversees marine fisheries and oceans. The National Ocean Service, under NOAA, researches, assesses, and preserves the US's coastal waters and its oceans. The National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA Fisheries, works to protect the living resources of the US's ocean spaces, ensuring that fish populations are well understood and managed. NOAA also does marine mapping, fisheries research, and other activities that provide the knowledge we need to create appropriate marine policy.

4. US Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs: <http://www.state.gov/e/oes/>

The State Department's OES works with other countries on bilateral and multilateral treaties concerning ocean issues, fisheries, or other marine resources. They work to ensure that fisheries are properly managed and that US fishermen have the access they need to the world's fisheries. They also work to prevent international marine pollution and work with international organizations such as the United Nations on international marine law and policy. The State Department is the official voice of the US abroad, and thus has responsibilities for ensuring the US has a role in creating and maintaining international maritime law.

5. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management: <http://www.boem.gov/>

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is a branch of the Department of Interior that controls offshore resources. BOEM is responsible for overseeing the offshore oil and gas industry, the offshore wind and renewable energy industry, and offshore lease sales for these and other resources. BOEM is also responsible for conducting environmental studies regarding offshore industries.

6. Food and Agricultural Organization: <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>

The FAO is a branch of the United Nations that oversees food security – that is, issues involving people’s access to the food they need to survive. Fisheries management falls under their purview, and they do a lot of work to determine the status of the world’s fisheries and what should be done to make them more sustainable. Note that this is a UN organization based in Rome, Italy, and will likely require that employees speak at least two of the six United Nations official languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, and Chinese).

7. International Maritime Organization: <http://www.imo.org/>

The IMO is another UN based organization, this time located in London. The IMO handles issues of marine shipping and pollution. They work with shipbuilders, shipping companies, insurance agencies, and state representatives to put together regulations on ship construction and pollution that best protect both marine life and the lives of humans who travel by ocean. They also work to reduce instances of maritime piracy that threaten ships and their crews.

8. Various Non-Profit Organizations

Lastly, if you are interested in promoting the protection of the marine environment, you could work for an environmental nonprofit. Major international environmental organizations work around the world and with policymakers in various countries to ensure the protection of the marine environment. Many of these organizations also engage in scientific research themselves and craft policy options that they present to governments. But these groups are only advocacy groups – unlike the agencies above, they don’t have any power to create or enforce law.