



Methodology Guide:

REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACCOUNTING

Overview

Generally speaking, regional economic accounting is a methodology that tallies economic indicators such as number of businesses (establishments), number of employees, gross domestic product, and other economic metrics for a particular geographic region. Sometimes a person might be interested in estimating the value or the magnitude of the coastal or marine economy for a particular state or county. This type of analysis is generically called coastal and marine regional economic accounting. For the purposes of this guidance document, we focus on coastal and marine industries.

When to Consider

- If you want to track economic indicators over time for a particular region or set of industries (in this case, for the coastal or marine economy at the national, state, or county level).
- If you want to develop an economic baseline for a particular region or set of industries (in this case, for the coastal or marine economy at the national, state, or county level).
- If you want to answer questions along the lines of—*what is the value of the economy associated with, or dependent on, Great Lakes resources?*

Important Results

- You can get economic metrics, including the number of establishments (businesses) and jobs, wages, and gross domestic product, using the resources below. These metrics can serve as indicators of the value of your coastal or marine economy.
- You can use these indicators to tell a story about the value and level of diversity of coastal and marine businesses in your state, county, or area of interest.

Strengths

- Historical data are publicly available for the coastal and marine economies.
- This type of analysis may not require the help of an economist because **data are already generated**.

Challenges

- While coastal and marine industries are made readily available in the links below, other industries may not be. Accessing data may require making special requests to government agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Because the data are self-reported, there may be errors in industry classification.
- Certain geographies may not have data available, such as the U.S. territories.

Key Suggestions, Interpreting Results, and Potential Mistakes

- Because of the challenges listed above, this type of approach may not provide a full accounting or picture, resulting in a conservative proxy for the value of the coastal and marine economies. Also, the marine economy data provided below includes industries that are wholly dependent on marine resources and excludes those that are partially dependent. For example, construction companies focused on land-based projects that aren't physically situated near the water, and that also work sometimes on marine construction projects for beaches, dunes, culverts, etc., will not be included in the databases linked below.
- For in-depth insight on key suggestions, interpreting results, and potential mistakes, read the [Economics National Ocean Watch frequently asked questions](#).

Key Steps

1. Identify the Area and Economy of Interest

Identify the state or county you are interested in estimating the value for. Also, determine whether you are interested in estimating the coastal economy or the marine economy, or both. These different measures of a subset of the economy have different definitions. The coastal economy encompasses all business activity within a coastal state or shoreline county. The marine economy encompasses only marine (ocean and Great Lakes) dependent businesses.

2. Download the Data

Visit the Digital Coast websites in the [resources section](#) below and download the data needed.

3. Compile and Describe

Compile your data for a given year, or years, to describe your specified coastal or marine economy's value using the economic indicators gross domestic product, number of employees, number of establishments, and wages. Put these estimates into a story to illustrate the value of your coastal or marine economy. Consider supplementing the indicators with port economic impact studies, oral histories, cultural resources, and other value indicators.

Additional Resources

Getting Help

- Reach out to our team (econguidance@noaa.gov) for specific questions or to brainstorm how to start your regional economic accounting analysis.
- Hire a private consultant or request support from academic partners. Researchers, graduate students, and academic scholars may be able to provide guidance or work directly on your regional economic accounting analysis.

Other Resources

- NOAA's Office for Coastal Management hosts online tools, offers reports, and provides project and research consultation (technical assistance) to help people estimate the value of their state's and county's coastal and marine economies. These numbers are updated annually in both the [NOAA National and Regional Reports on the U.S. Marine Economy](#).
- For smaller areas, like a town or working waterfront, NOAA conducts virtual and in-person training opportunities, since those methods are more complex, requiring additional site-specific nuance. Contact Office for Coastal Management economists for help with this granular data if you choose not to attend a training opportunity.
- NOAA's Office for Coastal Management offers a training opportunity: [Estimating the Local Marine Economy: Telling your Story Training](#). You can request a virtual or in-person training for your community.
- The ENOW Explorer accesses Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) data as well as data on the coastal and marine economies for your state or county. [ENOW frequently asked questions](#).
- [NOAA Reports on the U.S. Marine Economy](#) includes annually updated national, regional, and state-level reports distilled from the ENOW database.
- Reach out to our team (econguidance@noaa.gov) for specific questions or to brainstorm how to start your coastal or marine economy valuation.

Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) Data

- [ENOW Sector Data](#) includes the U.S. national marine and coastal economy sectors and is updated annually.
- [ENOW Industry Data](#) download includes the U.S. national marine and coastal economy industries and is updated annually.
- [Crosswalk Table](#) lists industries within sectors of the marine economy as defined by NOAA.