

International Maritime Boundaries

Description - The U.S. continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claims cover approximately three million square miles of ocean space. Overlapping boundaries with other nations exist in 25 situations. International maritime boundaries are those agreed upon by one or more countries to resolve these overlapping claim issues.

Primary Agency – Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) & National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Ocean Service, Office of the Coast Survey.

Spatial Extent - Dependent on boundary.

Description - The following notices have been published that define U.S. maritime boundaries and fishery conservation zones: Public Notice 506, *Federal Register*, Vol. 41, No. 214, November 4, 1976, 48619-20; Public Notice 526, *Federal Register*, Vol. 42, No. 44, March 7, 1977, 12937-40; Public Notice 544, *Federal Register*, Vol. 42, No. 92, May 12, 1977, 24134; Public Notice 4710-01, *Federal Register*, Vol. 43, No. 7, January 11, 1978, 1658; Public Notice 585, *Federal Register*, Vol. 43, No. 7, January 11, 1978, 1659; Public Notice 910, *Federal Register*, Vol. 49, No. 155, August 9, 1984, 31973. (Department of Defense (DOD) document 2005.1-M).

Official Depiction – NOAA Nautical Charts

Known Digital Data Source - NOAA Office of Coast Survey, accessible on-line at <http://chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov/csd/eez.htm>

Notes - Sometimes the U.S. recognizes a maritime boundary that is not recognized by a neighboring country (e.g., Cuba). Negotiations often carry on for many years before a bilateral treaty is signed (e.g., U.S./Canada Boundary in the Gulf of Maine).

Issues - There appears to be a difference between the NOAA U.S. exclusive economic zone coverage and the MMS coverage. There are several places where the difference between these two coverages is approximately .001 decimal degrees (about 400 meters). The maritime boundary points of the EEZ are published in the *Federal Register* to the nearest second (.00027 decimal degrees), although, this does not imply precision (Loy 1999). Several references to ambulatory points are made (e.g., "the international maritime boundary in the Gulf of Mexico shall begin at the center of the mouth of the Rio Grande, wherever it may be located").