

State Seaward Boundary

Description - The limit of the state's jurisdictions under the Submerged Lands Act (SLA). Although many exceptions exist, the land and resources between the ordinary high water mark and the state seaward boundary (SSB) are generally held in trust by the coastal state for the benefit of the public (CSO 1997).

Primary Agency – Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)

Spatial Extent - Three nautical miles (although it is three marine leagues, or nine nautical miles, for Texas and for the Gulf coast of Florida, and Puerto Rico) measured from the Submerged Lands Act baseline.

Description - Submerged Lands Act, sec. 1312. U.S. Code 43 (U.S.C. §§ 1301 et seq.) also, 30 CFR 256.8.

Official Depiction – May appear on some National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) nautical charts as the Natural Resource Boundary.

Known Digital Data Source – On-line at <http://www.boemre.gov/offshore/mapping/>

Notes - Federal land ownership and mineral resource management are supported within the SSB. The boundary is ambulatory unless "fixed" under a joint motion by the U.S. Supreme Court (Thormahlen, 1999b).

Issues - Offshore boundary lines are measured along an arc over the earth's ellipsoidal surface (chord length); therefore, arc distance varies with latitude and azimuth corresponding to variations in the radius of the earth's surface. As a result, the arc length must be computed (in three-dimensional space) separately for each stretch of coastline, even though the projection distance remains unchanged (Ball 1997). Many boundaries have been created using a buffer function in a geographic information system. This process does not take into account chord length or distortion due to projection and often may result in an inaccurate representation of the "envelope of arcs." Accordingly, the GIS boundary data may not accurately reflect the official or actual boundary.