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# The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Gulf of Maine Task Force Holds 2nd Meeting

BOEM held its second Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force meeting virtually on **Thursday, May 19, 2022**. See *"Public Engagement"* below for more information.

**Efforts Underway:** [Commercial Planning and Leasing Process](#) and [State of Maine Research Lease Application](#)

**Public Engagement:** Task Force Meetings

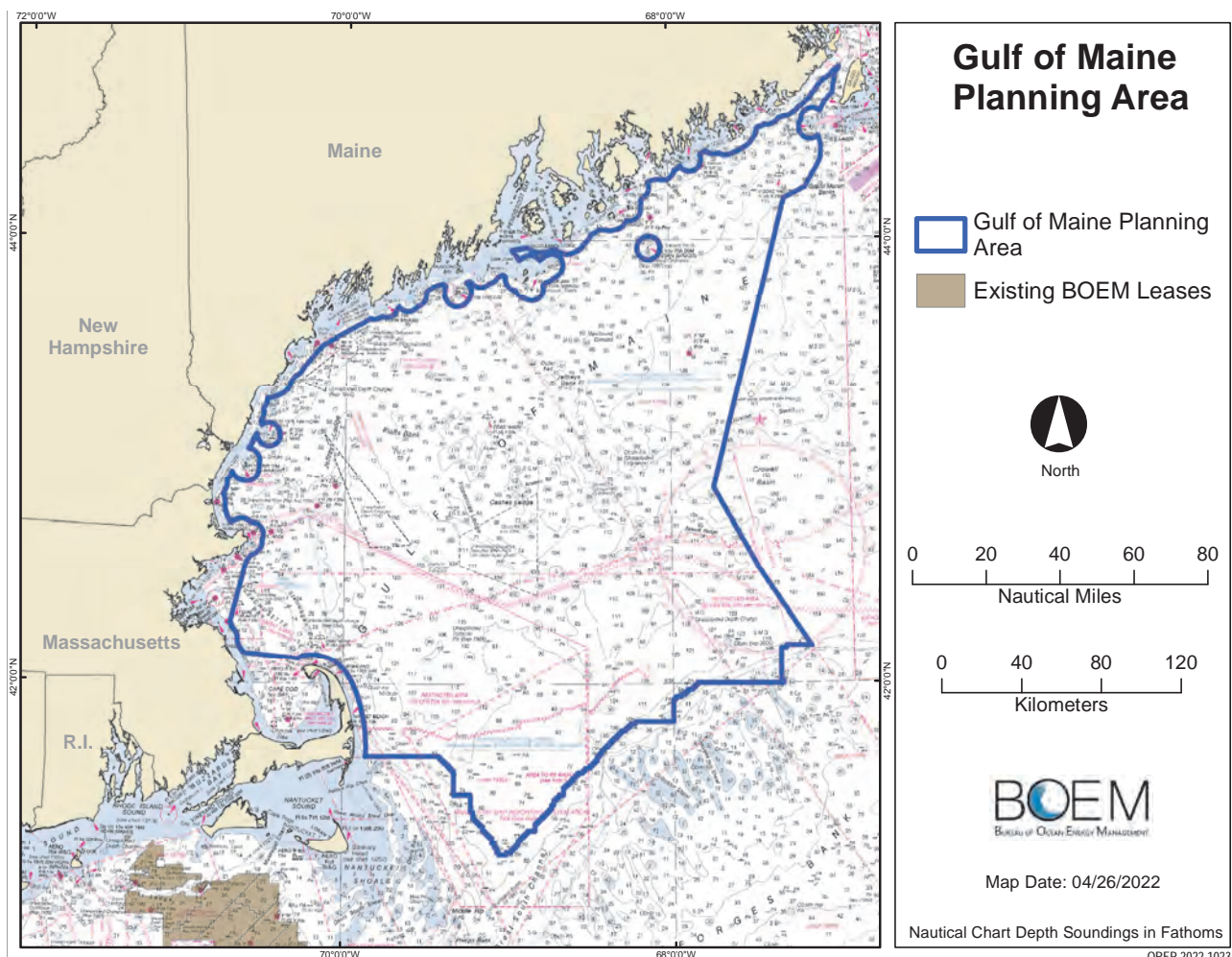
In January of 2019, Governor Christopher Sununu of the State of New Hampshire requested the establishment of an intergovernmental offshore wind renewable energy Task Force for the state. Given the regional nature of offshore wind energy development, BOEM decided to establish a Gulf of Maine Task Force, which is composed of federal officials and elected Tribal, state, and local officials from Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

#### **GULF OF MAINE TASK FORCE MEETING - MAY 19, 2022**

BOEM held its Gulf of Maine Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force meeting on Thursday, May 19, 2022, 9-5 p.m. EDT. The meeting was held virtually.

**The meeting focused on the following topics:**

- Commercial planning process for wind energy leasing in federal waters of the Gulf of Maine
- State and federal perspectives on offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine





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# As the HAULER TURNS

**The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association** would like to welcome the following new members to the Association. Your Association will continue its efforts on your behalf to conserve the resource, protect your livelihood, keep you informed, promote the industry and provide you with increasing benefits as they are developed. MLA stands ready to help you in anyway, at anytime — just let us know how! Safe on the water and good fishing!

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Happy Birthday America! As we celebrate Independence Day and reflect on what a great country we still live in, good bad and indifferent. Unfortunately, there are so many negative “things” happening to take away from our great nation, all of which are beyond any one person’s control. I am not going to list them all as you are well aware of the wall we are all up against and all we can do is keep putting one foot in front of another in hopes that tomorrow will be better than yesterday and so on! I’m grateful to be an American and will keep putting one foot in front of the other no matter how deep the \$hit gets.

With the 2022 lobstering season underway here in Massachusetts, I have been hearing from several of you that the loss of 5 months’ income due to the closure and the lobsters are now in a shed has negatively impacted your bottom-line and you are unsure of how the bills will get paid this year.

Please be aware that the MLA is still working with the MA State Legislators on Amendment 187 Lobstering Mitigation Closure Fund that will create an unemployment fund for this year. We have learned that this was withdrawn from the budget as the filing timeframe was too short to gain enough support to gain a formal vote. Whilst, Amendment 187 did have 16 Co-Sponsors it was still not enough and they did not want it to receive a NO vote which would

have stopped it completely.

After speaking with several legislators, they explained that Amendment 187 to the budget is still being worked on and they are looking for other funding avenues to get this funded in a supplemental budget or under the American Rescue Plan Act 2021 (ARPA) and or an Economic Bond Bill. Once this has been finalized and funded it will be retroactive from February 1, 2022 through June 30, 2022. Keep emailing your State Legislators to ask for their support so we can get this done sooner rather than later. Stay tuned!

After you are done reading this, please take a few moments and read the cover article as the recent Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Gulf of Maine (GOM) Task Force meeting set the stage for what is coming to the GOM by the middle of 2023.

BOEM will be holding Public Hearings asking for your input as they are starting the process on identifying a Wind Energy Area (WEA) in the GOM. The initial Call Area is the entire GOM area, do not be alarmed, as this area will be dramatically reduced into a Draft Call Area and reduced again after input from stake holders. The initial Call Area in Southern New England (SNE) was 85-90% bigger than the current WEA.

If you fish in the GOM north of Stellwagen Bank, please follow and participate in the

BOEM Public Hearings and comment accordingly as your input is needed. The MLA will be participating and commenting too, but more input and comments will help reduce the overall WEA. Please take a look at the BOEM timeline in this paper too.



Currently, many of you who are dual lobster permit holders are not yet required to have vessel tracking devices installed as the foot print they leave is what helped reduce the SNE WEA and in the GOM the lobster fleet does not leave a footprint. If you can start today, tracking your effort in the GOM please do so as your footprint matters.

Once this BOEM GOM process gets underway it will be like trying to drink from a fire hydrant so please keep your eye out for MLA Members emails from me. I will keep you posted on the BOEM process and other industry related issues. If you do not already receive the MLA Members emails from me, please email [beth.casoni@lobstermen.com](mailto:beth.casoni@lobstermen.com) and in the subject line note: Please add me to MLA Members email list.

Safe on the water,

*Beth Casoni*

Executive Director

## IN MEMORIAL

# Thomas R. Morrell



It is with heavy heart that we must tell you that a lifelong member, Thomas R. Morrell of Quincy passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on Monday, May 23, 2022. He was 85.

He was born in Boston to the late Frank and Florence (Mitchell) Morrell. At a very young age he moved from Roxbury to the Houghs Neck section of Quincy, where he would spend the rest of his life. He graduated from Quincy High School and was inducted into both the Quincy High Basketball and Football Hall of Fame. Tom worked for his family's construction business before starting his life's work, lobster fishing. He took great pride in his profession and was grateful to share this work with his brothers. He served for 10 years as Vice President of the Mass Lobsterman's Association and was a founding member of the Boston Harbor Lobsterman's Co-op.

In his spare time, Tom enjoyed being with his family, especially his cherished grandchildren. Whether it was a fishing trip, hockey game, dance recital or basketball tournament, Tom was a vocal spectator cheering with unconstrained enthusiasm. He spent summer vacations at his family home in Martha's Vineyard. A devout catholic, he was very involved with Holy Trinity Parish at Most Blessed Sacrament Church, always lending a helping hand. Tom was a member of the Quincy Yacht Club where he made many lasting friendships. He will be remembered as a prolific storyteller and will be missed by all who were lucky enough to have known him.

Beloved husband of 49 years to the late Patricia F. (Graffam) Morrell. Devoted father of Brigid Carroll (Steven) of Quincy, Cindy O'Callaghan (John) of Quincy, Gayle Sullivan of Gilford, NH, Patti Madore (Greg) of Gilford, NH, and Tom Morrell (Maureen) of Scituate. Loving brother of Daniel Morrell of Quincy. Cherished grandfather of Johnny (Alex), Michael, Brian, Taylor, Maggie, Gregory, Tommy, Kate and Charlie. He was predeceased by his loving siblings Arthur, Billy, John, Bud, Nancy and Albie. Companion of Maryellen Harnet of Braintree.

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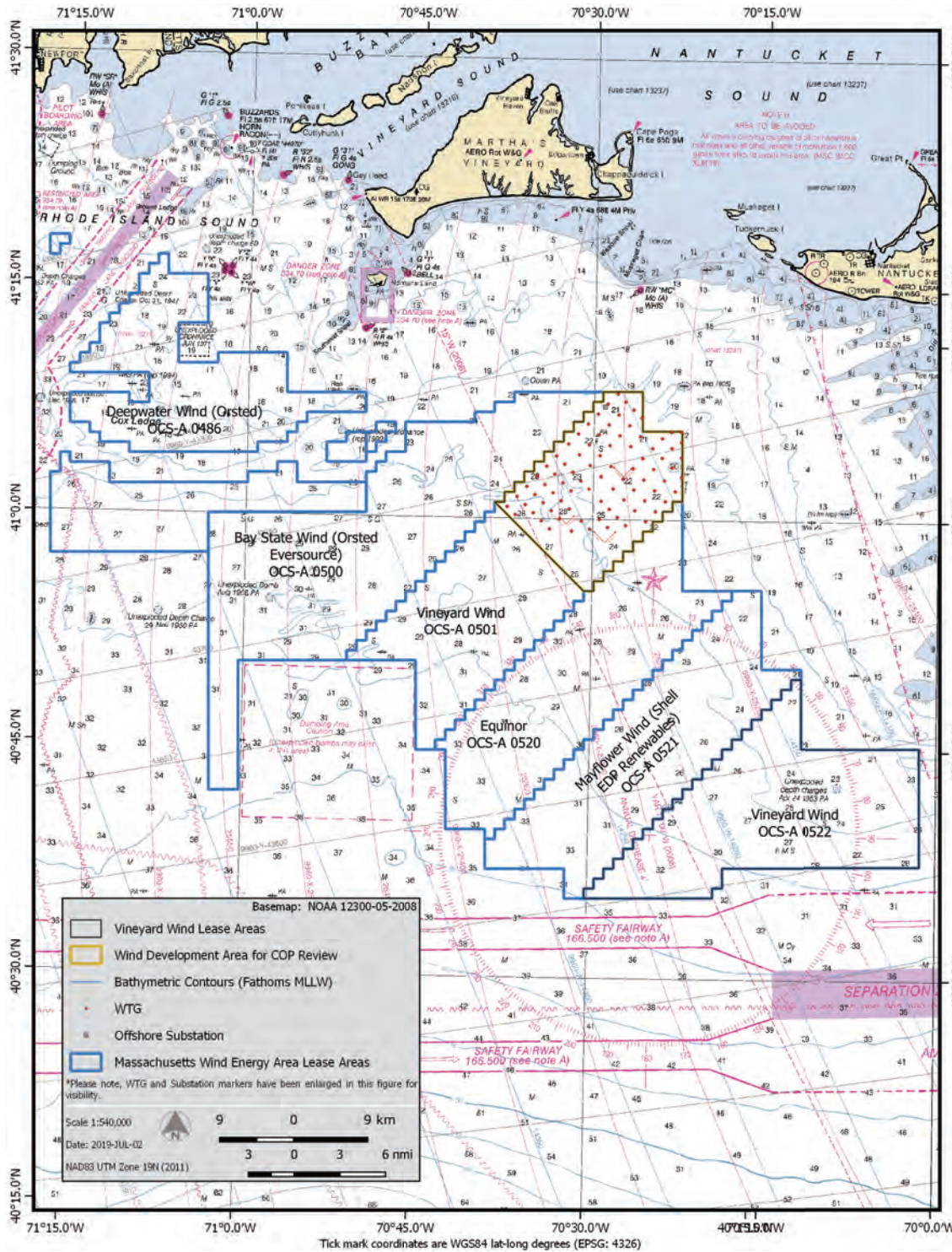
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# FISHERIES FAQs



### Will fishing be allowed in the wind farm once construction is completed?

Yes, all types of fishing, including commercial mobile and fixed gear as well as recreational, will be permitted within the wind farm once construction is complete and the project is operational.

### Will there be safety exclusion zones during construction?

Temporary safety zones will be established following USCG guidance during offshore construction and cable laying. Vineyard Wind will communicate with recreational and commercial vessel operators in advance of installation activities and throughout construction.

### Will there be a navigation corridor through the wind farm?

The USCG is currently undertaking a Port Access Route Study for the movement of vessel traffic offshore of the MA and RI Wind Energy Areas. The information gathered during this study may result in the establishment of one or more transit corridors through the area.

### Will there be a system in place for fishermen to report lost and/or damaged gear?

Yes, Vineyard Wind has an established lost/damaged gear protocol in case an incident occurs between a survey/construction vessel and fishing gear. The incident is logged and reported to the Fishery Liaison who will contact the fisherman.

### What is the proposed spacing between the turbines?

The 84 turbines will be spaced up to 1 nautical mile apart with an average spacing of 0.86 nm.

### What long term research or monitoring will be done to study the potential impacts?

Vineyard Wind is conducting extensive research to understand the effects of offshore wind on fisheries. Initial survey work to test technologies began in the fall of 2018. After consultation with fishermen and agencies, trawl surveys, drop camera surveys, ventless lobster trap, plankton and blacksea bass surveys began in the spring of 2019. These surveys are being led by the School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) and Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association. Commercial fishing vessels are used to conduct the research. Vineyard Wind has also partnered with the New England Aquarium to document highly migratory species presence across all lease areas with help from the pelagic recreational fleet.

Please contact Crista Bank, Fisheries Liaison, for latest information • 508-525-0421 • [cbank@vineyardwind.com](mailto:cbank@vineyardwind.com)



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# NROC WEBINAR SERIES

## Aquaculture in New England Federal Waters: Regulation, Public Engagement, and Interjurisdictional Coordination



The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC)'s Ocean Planning Committee hosted a webinar series about the regulatory process, public engagement, and interjurisdictional coordination for aquaculture in New England federal waters. This series built on NROC's 2020 webinar which highlighted federal efforts to designate Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in the United States, as well as NROC's recent development of a draft set of "Best Practices for Ocean Permitting and Management Processes." The objectives of this webinar series were to provide a better understanding of the federal agency review and authorization process for aquaculture in federal waters, provide opportunities for participant inquiries and feedback about the process, and to obtain input from different sectors and interest groups.

### WEBINAR 1 • APRIL 5, 2022

#### *Federal Agency Review and Authorization of Aquaculture in New England Federal Waters*

The purpose of the first webinar was to provide an overview of the federal review and authorization process for aquaculture projects in New England federal waters and address questions from the audience. Presentations and discussion focused on the state of aquaculture in New England, the federal process to identify Aquaculture Opportunity Areas, case studies of aquaculture permitting from other regions, the federal agency review and authorization process for aquaculture in New England federal waters, enforcement, and ecological, climate and environmental justice considerations.

#### *Overview of Presentations*

NROC OPC Co-Chair Lou Chiarella, NOAA Fisheries and NROC Executive Director Nick Napoli provided an overview of the webinar series and highlighted its role in support of the NROC Ocean Planning Committee's goal - to provide a forum, data and information, best practices, and

opportunities to coordinate offshore planning, regulatory, and siting activities to improve ocean and coastal ecosystem health, enhance decision making, and ensure compatibility among human activities.

Presentation is available at: [https://neoccean-planning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/1.OPC\\_AquaWebinar\\_Intro\\_4-5-22.pdf](https://neoccean-planning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/1.OPC_AquaWebinar_Intro_4-5-22.pdf)

**Chris Schillaci, Regional Aquaculture Coordinator, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), NOAA Fisheries** provided an overview of the status of aquaculture in U.S. federal waters and NOAA's NEPA role for aquaculture projects in federal waters. Chris' presentation included: 1) review of federal permit / authorization requirements, 2) overview of federal consultation and review requirements, 3) overview and timeline for identification of Aquaculture Opportunity Areas, 4) overview about the status of federal waters aquaculture projects, and 5) review of Pacific Ocean Aquafarms as a case study for understanding the permitting and NEPA process. Resources highlighted during the presentation included:

- Executive Order 13921. Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth (May 7, 2020).
- Guide to Federal Aquaculture Grant and Financial Assistance Resources 2021
- Guide to Permitting Marine Aquaculture in the United States (2022)

Presentation is available at: <https://neoccean-planning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2.Schillaci-webinar-NROC.pdf>

**Christine Jacek, Senior Project Manager, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** provided an overview of the USACE Regulatory Program. Christine provided overview of 1) USACE permit authorities (Section 10, Section 404, Section 103, Section 408), 2) description of the regional general permit and individual permit processes, 3) key elements of a permit application, and 4) recommended best practices for permitting. Resources highlight-

ed during the presentation included:

- USACE New England District - Regulatory
- USACE New England District - Regional General Permits
- USACE New England District - Mitigation Guidance
- USACE New England District - Documents, Forms, and Guidance
- Section 408 Resources

Presentation is available at: [https://neocceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/3.Jacek\\_NROCAquacultureUSACEPresentation.pdf](https://neocceanplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/3.Jacek_NROCAquacultureUSACEPresentation.pdf)

**Eric Nelson, Biologist, Ocean and Coastal Protection Section, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** provided an overview of the EPA's role in regulating aquaculture in New England federal waters. Eric provided an overview of the following two Clean Water Act provisions applicable to federal waters aquaculture: 1) Section 402 - National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), and 2) Section 403 - Ocean Discharge Criteria. Eric also provided an overview of the NPDES permitting process and federal action consultation and reviews for aquaculture projects in federal waters. Resources highlighted during the presentation included:

- Compliance Guide for the Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Point Source Category
- Aquaculture NPDES Permitting

Presentation is available at: [https://neoccean-planning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/4.Nelson\\_EPA\\_R1\\_Reg-Offshore-Aq-in-Fed-Waters\\_28Mar22\\_FINAL.pdf](https://neoccean-planning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/4.Nelson_EPA_R1_Reg-Offshore-Aq-in-Fed-Waters_28Mar22_FINAL.pdf)

#### *Highlights from Q&A Segment*

**Will the Aquaculture Opportunity Area process address sources of toxic contaminants in ocean water/sediments that pose threats to consumption of finish/shellfish from aquaculture systems that pose health threats to sensitive populations?**

NOAA is currently developing the scope for what will be included in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Aquaculture Opportunity Areas. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and NOAA Seafood Inspection Program have provisions in place to evaluate and ensure the sanitation of molluscan shellfish cultured and harvested from federal waters under the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

**What happens after the five-year permit timeframe? Does the farm need permit renewal or does it need to cease operation?**

USACE authorizations for regional general permits and individual permits authorize a five-year construction period. Once the facility is up and running, it can operate in perpetuity in the manner originally authorized. If modifications are made or operations cease, the operator would be required to remove all structures or contact USACE to transfer operations. EPA also has a five-year permit. Once the five years expire, the operator is required to re-submit for a new permit. As long as the new permit application is submitted on time, the current permit can be extended until the new permit is released.

**How do USACE, EPA, and NOAA coordinate on enforcement of permit conditions? Once a project is permitted through the federal process, which agency or agencies oversees or enforces the provisions in the permits?**

While there are opportunities for agency coordination / cooperation for site visits to streamline logistics, each agency has their own process for permit oversight and enforcement. NMFS focuses on reporting requirements related to consultations, and the NOAA Seafood Inspection Program has a role in auditing requirements in contracts between federal waters molluscan shellfish aquaculture operations and Seafood Inspection Program. EPA has their own enforcement and compliance program. USACE enforces special conditions associated with their authorizations.

**What agency would be the lead for future inspections to ensure that the operation is working as planned or monitoring the discharge to make sure it is within the predicted parameters?**

Before permitting and construction, NOAA and EPA develop dispersion models to assess how the project will impact the benthic environment and water quality to inform the EPA NPDES discharge permit. EPA then oversees the monitoring process to ensure discharge is within the approved parameters.

**At what point does the Section 7 Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) occur?**

EPA looks for species present under the purview of FWS. If the location of a project indicates potential for these species to be present then EPA engages with FWS early in the process. USACE initiates consultation with FWS in conjunction with their permitting process. Consultations are conducted separate from the NEPA process but much of the information that would go into a biological assessment would be included in an EIS. There's a formal Section 7 consultation and technical assistance process but agencies also work together informally through early engagement to ensure that the EIS incorporates appropriate information about protected species.

FWS encourages early coordination so that unexpected impacts aren't identified late in the process. FWS is developing determination keys for listed species in the region and consultation package builders in their Information for Planning and Consultation system that deconstructs all parts of aquaculture projects and potential impacts to listed species.

**Does the EIS satisfy the Section 7 ESA biological assessment?**

The goal is to gather all appropriate information about protecting endangered species through the EIS process and include it in the agencies' Section 7 biological assessments. However, the changes in a species' status or consideration of other new information not included in the EIS may require the permitting agencies to update their biological assessments.

**Does the Executive Order apply to a project that involves a USACE permit and a state's Department of Natural Resource discharge permit? Would NOAA be the lead agency for NEPA on that?**

The EO only applies to aquaculture projects in federal waters that require two or more federal agency authorizations and an EIS.

**For New England offshore aquaculture, where would the draft EIS be posted for public review? Are there any current or imminent draft EIS consultations in this region?**

Public notices are posted via the federal register per legal requirements. In order to advance best practices to increase public awareness about the notices, NOAA and other agencies are utilizing additional communication methods to circulate notices to a broader audience. NROC is using the Northeast Ocean Data Portal to provide mapping and links to permit documents for aquaculture projects in federal waters.

**Can other federal agencies request a specific NOAA science/technical review of a specific proposed aquaculture project?**

NEPA has provisions that allow lead agencies to engage with other federal agencies as "cooperating" or "participating" agencies to support project evaluation. This also happens with respect to specific areas of project permitting during the consultations.

**How is climate change factored into the process for reviewing aquaculture projects?**

Climate change is a priority for the Biden Administration and is an important part of the NEPA review process. NOAA has to evaluate potential impact of projects in today's climate and consider the suitability of aquaculture operations for their ability to withstand anticipated impacts from increasingly intense storms. Future climate scenarios are factored into project review as far as structural integrity and suitability of the gear and operations. EPA considers the impact of climate change for reviewing aquaculture relative to increasing ocean acidification and suitability for certain aquaculture species to thrive in changing temperatures. For USACE, climate change is generally outside the scope for their regulatory review of aquaculture projects.

**Will AOA development and aquaculture initiatives be incorporated into BOEM's offshore wind siting in Gulf of Maine? How will these two priorities be balanced?**

Currently, NOAA has not stated the intention to develop an AOA in the Gulf of Maine. NOAA has worked with BOEM and other agencies in the Gulf of Mexico and other regions to ensure that there is regular communication across project types to help achieve permitting efficiency. Focus of AOAs is currently on developing programmatic environmental impact statements. AOA placement will be based on stakeholder input and collaboration among agencies to support the goal of sustainable seafood production. NOAA coordinates with BOEM to avoid planning conflicts.

**How will environmental justice will be considered during the review process?**

The NEPA and NPDES permitting process evaluate aquaculture projects to identify and minimize any potential impacts to environmental justice areas. This is also a priority for NOAA and an important part of the NEPA analysis for both offshore and nearshore or landside aspects of aquaculture projects. USACE has also prioritized environmental justice in their permitting review.

**Where would potential environmental challenges associated with offshore aquaculture, such as fish escapes/interbreeding or spread of invasive biofouling species, be addressed in the permit process?**

The NEPA review process seeks to identify and address these issues. EPA considers potential for escapements and other related concerns within the NPDES / Ocean Discharge Criteria review, especially for potential impacts on federally listed endangered species such as Atlantic salmon. Suitability and safeguards for the site will be required to minimize negative impacts and maintain integrity during storms. Monitoring may be required to assess potential for spread of invasive species. If the project involves a managed species, then the New England Fisheries Management Council is responsible for making sure the operation is consistent with fisheries management plans. USACE considers these concerns within their review of cumulative impacts which analyzes primary and secondary effects from the project. The public interest section also encompasses concerns not addressed elsewhere.

**How does USACE define a "minimum impact" project? Is there a certain size or other standard used to determine whether a project will have a "minimum impact"?**

A minimum impact determination is project specific. USACE uses more than project size to determine if a project is defined as having minimum impact. Additional factors such as conflicts with other users, proposed gear, cumulative effects, etc. may cause a project to be defined as having more than a minimum impact.

Links to all presentations and a recording of Webinar 1 are available at: <https://neocanplanning.org/planning-issues/aquaculture/>

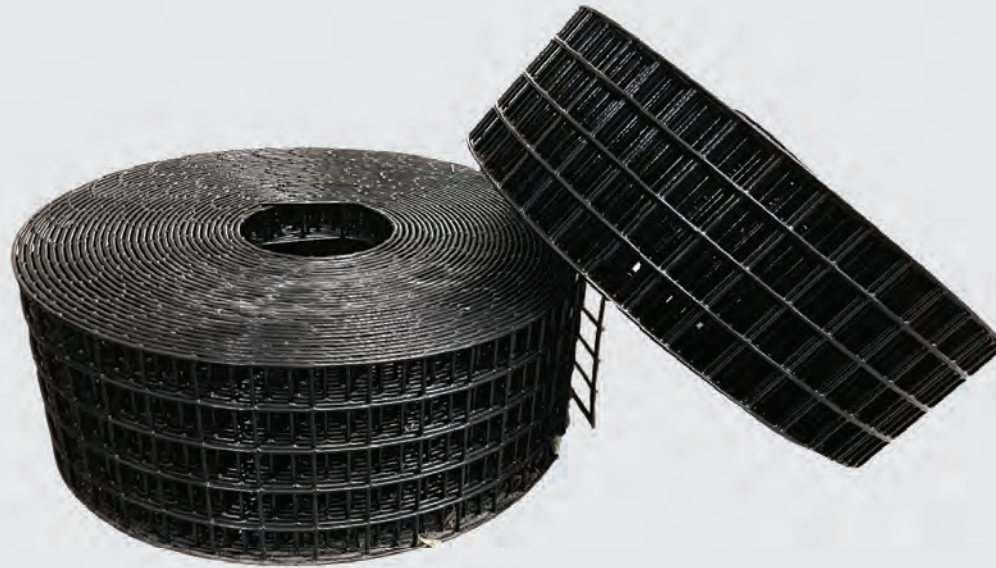
**WEBINAR 2 • APRIL 8, 2022**

***State, Tribal, and Public Perspectives on Improving the Regulatory Process for Aquaculture in New England Federal Waters***

This purpose of this webinar was to highlight state, tribal, and public perspectives on opportunities to improve the federal regulatory review process and better engage different interests in aquaculture permitting decisions for projects in New

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England federal waters. NROC OPC Co-Chair Ted Diers, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, and Chris Schillaci, NOAA Fisheries, provided an overview of the webinar agenda and key points from the first webinar in the series. Panel members representing state agencies, New England Fisheries Management Council, aquaculture industry, fishing industry, and environmental organizations were asked to provide their perspectives regarding the following questions:

- How can your interests best be addressed and incorporated into the regulatory permitting process? What is the best method and timing for engaging your group during the permitting process?
- Please provide recommendations about how to improve the process described by the federal agencies in the first webinar.
- What are potential next steps to better understand or improve the regulatory process – workshops/work group, topics to focus on in a workshop or work group, etc.?

The following panelists participated in the webinar: Tom Nies, New England Fisheries Management Council; Lisa Engler, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management; Chris Williams, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services; Amanda Ellis, Maine Department of Marine Resources; Sebastian Belle, Maine Aquaculture Association; Ted Maney, Salem State University; Paul Zajicek, National Aquaculture Association; Beth Casoni, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association; Robert Jones, The Nature Conservancy; and Priscilla Brooks, Conservation Law Foundation.

A link to the introductory presentation and a recording of Webinar 2 are available at: <https://neoplan.org/planning-issues/aquaculture/>

Highlights and takeaways from the panel discussions during Webinar 2 are provided below.

#### **Common Themes / Takeaways**

- NEPA provides an overarching review framework for the offshore aquaculture permitting process that seeks to ensure federal permitting agencies consider the significant environmental consequences of a proposed action, and inform and involve the public in their decision making.
- The Gulf of Maine can be a challenging environment for aquaculture development compared to other areas around the world (regulatory hurdles, environmental conditions, competing uses, and rapidly changing conditions).
- There are opportunities to improve the permitting framework by applying best practices to enhance communications, improve data QA/QC sharing, provide the public with access to resources and permits, make for a more efficient process, and ensure engagement among industry, tribes, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Additional training and resources are needed to ensure that all interested parties understand the permitting and public review process.
- Aquaculture development, siting, review, and permitting must be considered in the context of ecosystem functions and services.
- Communication should take place early (be-

fore formal process), often, across federal and state agencies, among states, and with all stakeholders to identify concerns early in the process and minimize conflicts.

- Maine's approach seeks to resolve real and perceived user conflicts by balancing interests of the applicant, public trust, and environmental protection.
- Understanding the impact of aquaculture on existing uses is a priority.
- Investments are needed to increase capacity for state and federal agencies charged with regulating and monitoring aquaculture projects, and to improve and update datasets.
- Monitoring is critical for understanding baseline conditions, impact during operations, and long-term effects on natural resources.
- NROC is in a unique position to convene industry, government and other stakeholders around best practices and learning opportunities related to offshore aquaculture.
- Northeast Ocean Data Portal is an important tool for characterizing resources, and highlighting aquaculture projects during siting, permitting and review. Updates / additions are needed.

#### **New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) Perspective**

- NEFMC focuses on Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) and managed species, protecting Essential Fish Habitat, and interactions with fisheries they manage.
- Clear communications among agencies, applicants and NEFMC that happen early and often are essential as the NEFMC process for managed species can take at least a year.
- NEFMC's Aquaculture policy and other aquaculture resources are available on the website:
  - NEFMC Aquaculture Policy (includes best practices: 1) siting and design in context of ecosystem functions and services, 2) operations should minimize environmental impact, 3) development should consider impact of multiple aquaculture sites on ecosystem, 4) aquaculture operators should contribute to coastal community, 5) aquaculture should consider context of other sectors, and 6) clear and ongoing communication between all parties is important)
  - Aquaculture Coordination Plan (includes three elements – engaging in conversations on specific projects, engaging in regional scale conversations, and developing more expertise to improve their review)

#### **State Agency Perspectives (ME, NH, and MA)**

- Aquaculture projects should be reviewed for their impact on regional ecosystems such as the unique Gulf of Maine system with its shared habitat, species, multiple maritime uses, and geopolitics (US/Canada).
- Applicants throughout the region should be required to engage with federal agencies and all three Gulf of Maine states.
- Federal consistency review should be considered for aquaculture projects regardless of home port.
- Existing uses and co-location should be

considered within the review process.

- Agencies should take advantage of the Northeast Ocean Data Portal:
  - Utilize extensive Gulf of Maine data available to characterize resources and uses.
  - Highlight aquaculture projects during the planning, siting, and permitting process.
  - Additional research is needed to support aquaculture in the Gulf of Maine.
  - EPA & NPDES should require monitoring to understand water quality impacts.
  - Research is needed to understand co-location and co-use of resources.
  - Enhanced data is needed to inform siting and provide detail about fishing footprint.
- Opportunities to engage with permitting agencies early in the process (ahead of submitting application) are critical for reducing conflict.
  - States should receive direct notice of pre-application meetings and opportunities to participate so they can identify concerns as early as possible and share information with federal agencies and applicants. Provides state with opportunity to assess proposal and identify concerns related to monitoring for biotoxin and shellfish sanitation.
  - Informal communications among states, across state and federal agencies, and with NEFMC are important for identifying shared concerns and connecting with fisheries / habitat engagement groups.
  - Communication and coordination across agencies and stakeholders must continue throughout the planning, siting and permitting process.
- Applicants should be required to plan and provide information about necessary onshore components (moorings, hatcheries, constructing pens, vessels, etc.) needed to support offshore aquaculture as part of their project proposal.
- Maine's aquaculture review and permitting process accounts for variety of perspectives and multiple users to focus on safeguarding aquatic and public health. Other states are invited.
- Federal agencies should develop targeted outreach materials and provide training for states and municipalities (e.g., information about where to find comment periods, what to include in comments, how and when to engage in process, and what tools are available to understand the proposed project).

#### **Coordination with Tribes**

- NOAA is required to consult, coordinate, and engage with tribes through NEPA and in the 2020 Executive Order: Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth. Coordination with tribes also reflects agency best practices.
- NEFMC relies on NOAA for tribal coordination as they do not have a legislatively-designated tribal representative. Meetings are open to public and tribes are encouraged to attend.

- Maine conducts a robust public notification and engagement process that encompasses outreach to tribes and other stakeholders.
- Massachusetts provides public notice through the federal consistency review process to all stakeholders and encourages engagement with tribes. Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources staff at CZM also engages with tribes.
- NROC has prioritized increasing communication and coordination with tribal partners over the next year in order to build capacity for tribes to participate.

#### ***Aquaculture Industry Perspectives***

- Gulf of Maine has a relatively hostile aquaculture permitting framework compared to other locations around the world. Aquaculture investors factor this into decision making.
- Given need for sustainable food supply, streamlined regulation should encourage aquaculture production in the US.
- Maine's stream-lined, 'one-stop-shop' approach is an excellent model. Maine's leasing and environmental protection processes balance interests of applicant, public trust, environment, and focus on resolving real or perceived user conflicts.
- MSA is not helpful or well-suited to assess aquaculture. Industry believes aquaculture should be exempt because it differs from management of wild fisheries. NEFMC and fisheries agencies have other opportunities to review and provide input during aquaculture permitting.
- Monitoring should be streamlined to focus on specific priorities.
- Permit applicants should have more direct involvement in Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and biological assessment to share their expertise.
- Upfront communications are needed to improve awareness about the permitting process.
- Agencies should develop and adhere to clear permitting timelines and provide regular updates to applicants about the status of permit.
- Agencies should create an open-access library of past permit applications, consultations, and associated documents as a resource for new applicants (NROC would be the ideal repository).
- A workshop is needed to increase understanding about interactions between protected species and aquaculture.
- Reduce use of jargon and acronyms in communications about the permitting process.
- Regulatory agencies are working in silos. They don't consider the cumulative burden of monitoring requirements that may be duplicative across agencies. This creates unfair economic burden on industry, especially for small experimental operators.
- Agencies should consider conducting a table top exercise for a sample aquaculture operation to identify data gaps, consider how agencies are coordinating, and identify concerns.
- Norwegian process provides model for aquaculture operations with streamlined permitting that allows operators to scale up without completely restarting the permitting process.

- Monitoring costs for offshore aquaculture should be shared between the grower and agencies to reduce unfair burden. States pay for some of the testing for nearshore aquaculture.

#### ***Fishing Industry Perspective***

- Offshore aquaculture is a concern for the lobster industry which faces multiple competing uses.
- Lobster industry is not well represented in the NE Ocean Data Portal or other spatial datasets as the industry does not leave a footprint (they are everywhere).
- Lobster industry recommends that aquaculture planning be paused until Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) can get their program up and running. This information is critical for understanding potential impact of aquaculture on lobster industry.
  - Get vessel monitoring system (VMS) data on lobster vessels
  - Characterize fishing activities
- Lobster industry also has concerns about gear conflicts.
  - How close can fishing occur near aquaculture farms?
  - Cumulative increases in offshore wind and aquaculture pose multiple challenges that will require existing uses to move.
- Protected species are also a concern. For example, areas closed to fishing to protect right whales could face risks from increased aquaculture activity.

#### ***Environmental Group Perspectives***

- Aquaculture is a resource-efficient way to produce food but also presents environmental challenges.
- Although US has a significant seafood market, most aquaculture produced seafood is imported from overseas producers. This is not the most sustainable approach.
- US needs to optimize the regulatory / permitting framework for offshore aquaculture with protective, transparent and efficient regulatory structures.
- Federal and state agencies need investment to ensure they have adequate resources to coordinate an effective aquaculture regulatory process.
  - Develop agency science program that can deliver decision support tools (modeling environmental effects, spatial analytics, protected species interactions)
  - Expand capacity for staffing and resources at NOAA and other permitting agencies
- Aquaculture poses environmental concerns related to benthic habitat degradation, EFH, interaction with marine wildlife (seabirds, sea turtles etc.), water quality, and impacts on other human uses depending on species, siting, and technology.
- Additional opportunities for meaningful public engagement and discussion are needed. Public notification should go beyond federal register notices. States can help increase engagement via fisheries management councils.
- AOA process appears to be an effective ocean

planning process for consideration of new uses. Conducting a full programmatic EIS in advance of identifying AOA sites is preferable to more reactive, industry-driven selection of sites.

#### ***Monitoring Insights***

- Aquaculture projects provide an opportunity to expand ocean monitoring. Existing projects have wealth of monitoring data that can be used for other ocean management purposes.
- Comprehensive monitoring (pre-during-post) is needed to provide information about how the project will impact the ecosystem.
- Monitoring should focus on water quality, habitat, and wildlife interactions.
- NPDES permit outlines monitoring requirements for pollutants. Additional monitoring may be included through protected species consultations by the responsible agency (e.g., acoustic monitoring to understand whale presence around aquaculture).
- Understanding baseline conditions is an ongoing challenge for NEPA.
- Bathymetry and water column monitoring are needed in advance of permitting.
- Monitoring costs are high but adequate monitoring is needed to understand the impact of this relatively new industry. Advances in science and monitoring techniques should help over time.

#### ***Suggestions for NROC***

- Coordinate with permitting agencies to highlight specific aquaculture projects on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal during planning, permitting and siting.
  - Provide access to permits, consultations, and lists of stakeholders.
  - Add resources to inform applicants about the permitting process.
- NROC should provide learning opportunities related to offshore aquaculture best practices, monitoring, issues of concern, and lessons learned from other areas in the US and around the world. Potential topics:
  - Convene a working group that includes stakeholder input / host a workshop to explore the AOA process in Gulf of Mexico and Southern California and consider how to apply lessons learned in New England.
  - Opportunities and challenges of co-locating uses.
  - Understanding economic perspective and outlook for aquaculture.
  - Understanding interactions between protected species and aquaculture.
- Continue improving and refining NROC's Northeast Ocean Data Portal.
  - Expand information about fisheries activities (identify transit vs. actual fishing).
  - Enhance / expand data to address gaps to be identified by agency table top exercise.
  - Ensure data QA/QC. Update data to reflect current conditions / remove old data.
  - Improve scale of data. Finer scale data is needed to support site selection.



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May 23, 2022

Kris Singh, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
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Camden, NJ, 08104

Kelly Trice  
President  
Holtec Decommissioning International  
1 Holtec Boulevard  
Camden, NJ 08104

Dear Dr. Singh and Mr. Trice,

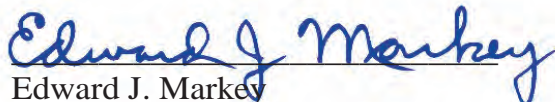
We write to you today regarding Holtec's commitments made before the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air, Climate and Nuclear Safety to engage and employ members of our Nation's labor unions at all Holtec sites, including nuclear power generation facilities that are now being decommissioned by Holtec.


For decades, the expert work provided by the women and men of our proud labor unions has been critical to the safe operation and maintenance of Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station (Pilgrim) and other nuclear power generation stations across the country. Union work is now critical to the safe and efficient decommissioning of stations like Pilgrim. Central to that successful work is the development of strong labor agreements that are negotiated in good faith, address concerns of all parties, and ensure the safety and security of workers and the public.

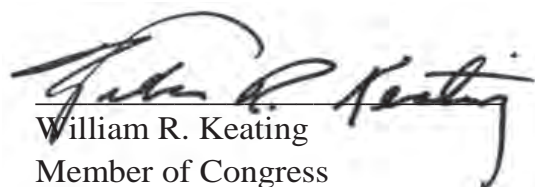
We appreciate your commitment made at the hearing to work cooperatively with all labor unions, including those who are not currently a party to the Holtec Decommissioning International, LLC (HDI) agreement but who worked under the National Labor Agreement for the Decommissioning, Decontamination, and Demolition of Nuclear Power Generation Facilities. We respectfully urge Holtec to fulfill the commitment made at the hearing to meet with the unions involved with the decommissioning of Pilgrim and other stations. As stated at the hearing, the relevant unions include the Laborers' International Union of North America, the International Union of Operating Engineers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, and the International Association of Bridges, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers.

We appreciate your willingness to meet with the unions and seek to resolve the ongoing labor concerns involving staffing for decommissioning. We look forward to Holtec convening a meeting of the unions to discuss and seek to resolve outstanding labor issues. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress







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# Task Force

## FROM PAGE 1

- Framework approach for the first step in the commercial planning process - a Request for Interest (RFI)
- Stakeholder engagement approach for the commercial planning process
- State of Maine's research lease application

### Meeting Purpose and Objectives:

- Facilitate coordination, consultation, and information sharing among federal, state, local, and Tribal governments regarding renewable energy leasing process on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) in the Gulf of Maine (offshore of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine).
- Receive updates from other Task Force members, including individual states, various federal agencies, and Tribal governments.
- Discuss next steps in the processing of Maine's research lease application (RFCI).
- Discuss next steps in the offshore wind energy leasing process for the Gulf of Maine states and share

### Task Force member feedback on:

- An RFI Development Framework
- Tribal & stakeholder engagement approach once the RFI is released
- Provide opportunities for public input on the topics being considered by the Task Force.

During the meeting, Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Beth A. Card, gave a presentation on ***Building a Net-Zero Commonwealth***. Here are some highlights from her presentation:

### AN ACT CREATING A NEXT-GENERATION ROADMAP FOR MASSACHUSETTS CLIMATE POLICY (3/26/21)

- Offshore Wind Authorization - Total of 5,600 MW by 2027.

- Emission Limits - Commits Massachusetts to achieve Net Zero emissions in 2050 - Authorizes the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to establish an emissions limit of no less than 50% for 2030, and no less than 75% for 2040 - Sets emissions limits every five years and sub-limits for at least six sectors of the Massachusetts economy.
- Environmental Justice - Statutorily defines Environmental Justice and environmental burdens, including climate change as an environmental burden.

### 2050 DECARBONIZATION ROADMAP: KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### Electricity Generation

- Offshore wind is the backbone of decarbonized electricity generation in Massachusetts.
- Across all pathways, the Commonwealth needs a minimum of 15 GW of offshore wind by 2050
- Solar PV made up 25%-30% of electricity generation across most pathways. Both rooftop PV and ground-mounted PV were needed

#### Electricity Balancing

- Challenge with infrequent but long-lasting periods (approx. 6 days) of fallow wind production
- Thermal power plants and imports required at a large scale to maintain reliability on a low-wind days.
- Flexible operation of electrolysis facilities to produce hydrogen

#### Transmission

- Expanded transmission capacity between Quebec and Massachusetts is important in all pathways
- Intra-NE transmission capacity found to be economic in multiple pathways
- Substantial expansion of transmission and distribution within Massachusetts is necessary to meet the approximately doubled final electricity demand resulting

from electrification

### COMMONWEALTH PROCUREMENTS TO DATE

#### Three Procurements:

- Round 1: Vineyard Wind 800 MW project - Onshore and export cable construction underway
- Round 2: Mayflower Wind 804 MW project - Project in advanced planning/permitting
- Round 3: Two projects Totaling 1,600 MW - Avangrid 1,200 MW project - Mayflower 400 MW project = 3,200 MW OSW in the pipeline (approx. 25% of MA annual electricity demand)
- Next MA RFP must be released by May 2023

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: MA WORKING GROUPS

Leverage existing MA working groups to receive guidance and share resources relative to fisheries and marine habitat uses in Gulf of Maine:

Fisheries Working Group on Offshore Wind Energy: commercial fishermen and reps, recreational fishermen, researchers, state/federal agencies

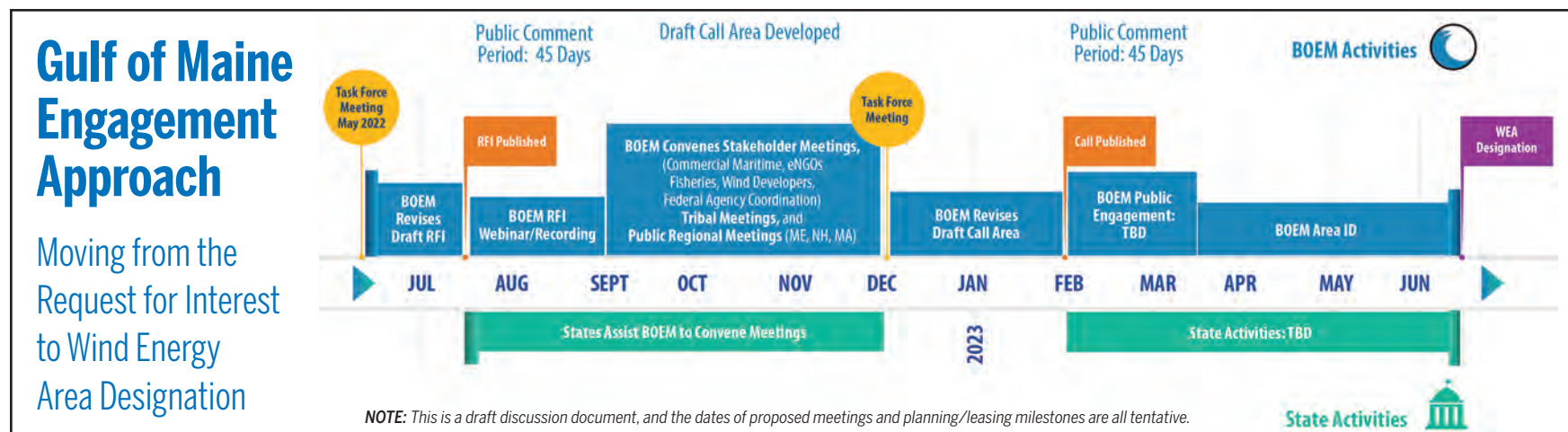
Habitat Working Group on Offshore Wind Energy: Scientists and technical experts from environmental organizations, academia, and state/federal agencies.

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association has been actively engaged in the development of offshore wind for over 15 years now and we are still at the table to ensure your voices are heard.

Since there is still no steel in the water in the MA/RI wind lease area this process is a lengthy one and we will stay the course to safeguard your industry while you are fishing.

For a full meeting summary and access to all of the presentations please visit:

<https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/maine/gulf-maine>





# Gulf of Maine Request for Interest (RFI) Development Framework

BOEM's offshore wind leasing strategy for 2021-2025 includes the goal of holding a commercial lease sale within the Gulf of Maine in 2024. To achieve this goal, BOEM has decided to start with a request for interest (RFI). Beginning with an RFI will allow BOEM to gauge commercial interest in offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine, while also maximizing the opportunity for the public to engage and provide input.

This document explains BOEM's framework for developing the Gulf of Maine RFI, both in terms of the spatial extent of the RFI area, as well as the data and information BOEM will seek from the public to inform subsequent analyses in the planning and leasing process (e.g., Call Area, Wind Energy Areas).

BOEM is sharing this RFI Development Framework for consideration and discussion at the May 19, 2022, Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting.

## Defining the RFI Area

Before determining the extent of the RFI Area, BOEM first had to define a Planning Area for the Gulf of Maine commercial planning and leasing process (Figure 1). This Planning Area is roughly bounded on the west, north, and east by BOEM's jurisdiction for renewable energy activities on the outer continental shelf (OCS), ranging 3nmi from shore to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). BOEM delineated the southern boundary of the Planning Area by looking at the physiographic, oceanographic, and biotic variables that together uniquely define the Gulf of Maine.<sup>1</sup> This Planning Area also avoids any overlap with the Planning Area used for the previous Massachusetts/Rhode Island planning and leasing process.

Next, BOEM seeks to refine the Planning Area to determine the extent of the RFI Area. This involves removing areas that are incompatible with offshore wind energy development.

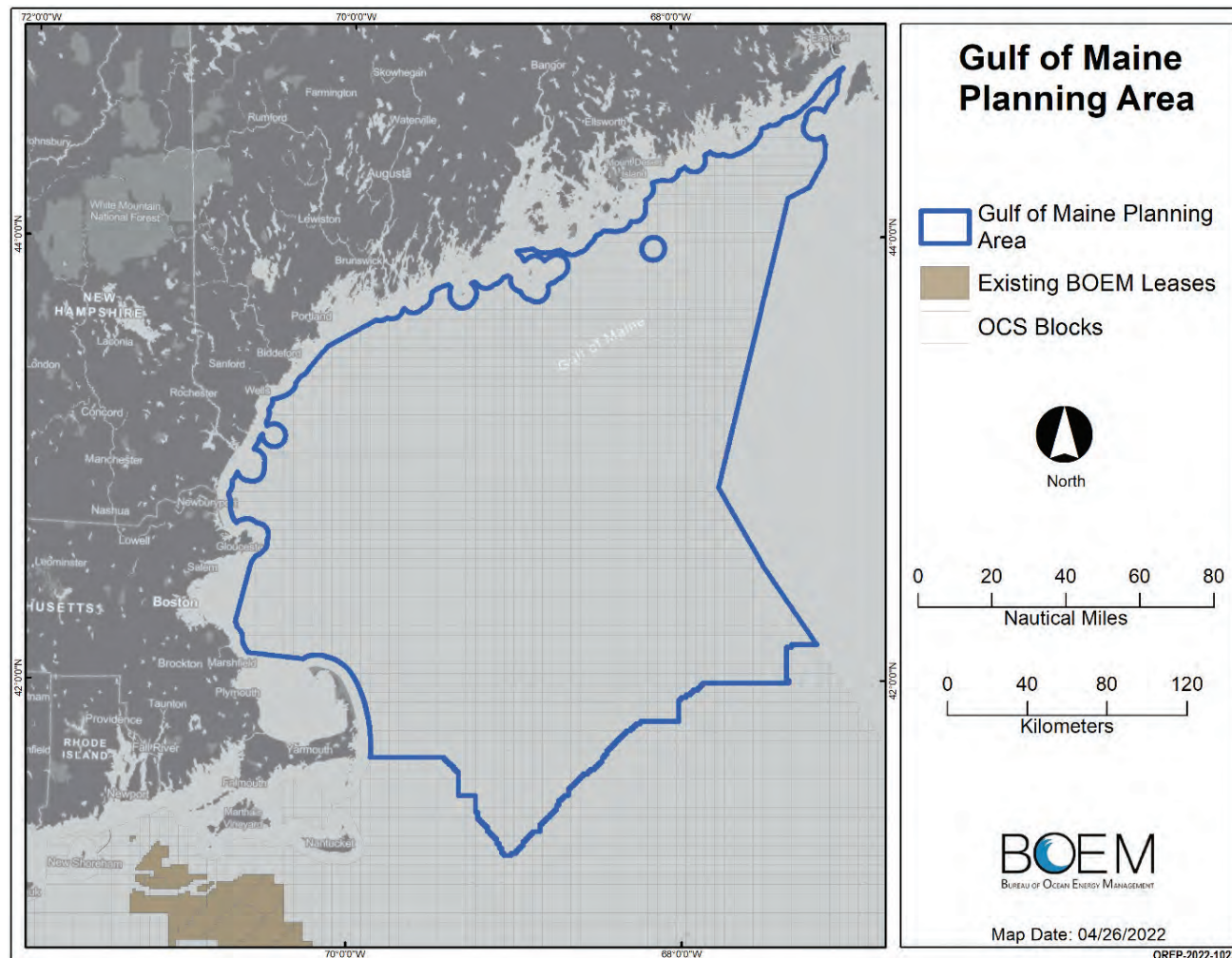


Figure 1: BOEM Gulf of Maine Planning Area

**Incompatible Areas** are areas in which offshore wind energy development cannot occur as a result of law, jurisdiction, or technical considerations, resulting in those areas being excluded from the RFI Area.

- a. National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Marine Sanctuary System, or any National Monument (§585.204)
- b. Existing Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS), fairways, or other internationally recognized navigation measures
- c. Existing BOEM lease areas
- d. Unsolicited lease request areas that are the subject of a separate

request for competitive interest (e.g., State of Maine's requested research lease)

Following removal of these Incompatible Areas, BOEM generated the following DRAFT RFI Area for consideration and discussion at the Task Force Meeting (Figure 2).

**NOTE:** An RFI is largely an information gathering step, both in terms of development interest from industry and to solicit data and concerns from potentially affected parties. As such, BOEM retains discretion to keep apparently conflicted spaces in the RFI Area in order to ask the public for information on how best to define a feature and inform its potential

removal during subsequent phases of the planning/leasing process (e.g., Call Area, Wind Energy Areas).

## RFI Requested Information from Interested or Affected Parties

**1. Requested Information Categories:** These are important topics or datasets for which BOEM is seeking further information to help inform subsequent phases of the planning/leasing process in the Gulf of Maine.

- a. Commercial and recreational fishing data, including spatial data (e.g., landings, value, vessel traffic, home ports). Species and sectors of interest include, but are not limited to:

<sup>1</sup> The southern boundary of BOEM's Gulf of Maine Planning Area is an adaptation of the Gulf of Maine Ecological Production Unit defined in the "State of the Ecosystem Report" (Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2021).



- i. Highly migratory species
- ii. Lobster/Jonah crab
- iii. Monkfish
- iv. Multispecies (groundfish)
- v. Northern shrimp
- vi. Ocean quahog
- vii. Pelagics (e.g., herring, mackerel, squid)
- viii. Scallops
- ix. Small mesh multispecies (e.g., whiting)
- b. Protected Species/Habitat
  - i. Presence of endangered, threatened, or sensitive avian/marine life
  - ii. Presence and proximity to designated ESA Critical Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat/Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC)
- c. Climate change impacts
  - i. Fisheries/protected species distribution (spatial/temporal)
- d. Current and future Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) interests
  - i. USCG PARS
- e. Maritime navigation/safety issues (e.g., commerce routes, port access)
- f. Presence of historic properties/landmarks/districts
- g. Tribal issues of concern and indigenous traditional knowledge
- h. Community profiles, resiliency, and socioeconomic vulnerability
- i. Presence of marine archaeological and culturally significant sites
- j. Visual impacts (e.g., to coastal communities, national parks and seashores, local seascapes)
- k. Presence of seafloor telecommunications cables, disposal areas, unexploded ordinances
- l. Oceanographic factors such as seafloor morphology, wind speed, water depth, shallow hazards, sea floor slope, currents, and tidal influence
- m. Proximity of national seashores, marine sanctuaries, national marine monuments, wildlife refuges, or other exclusion areas to any future lease areas
  - a. Data to support any recommended buffers or set-backs
- n. State and local renewable energy goals, mandates, and preferences
- o. Technical Design Parameters

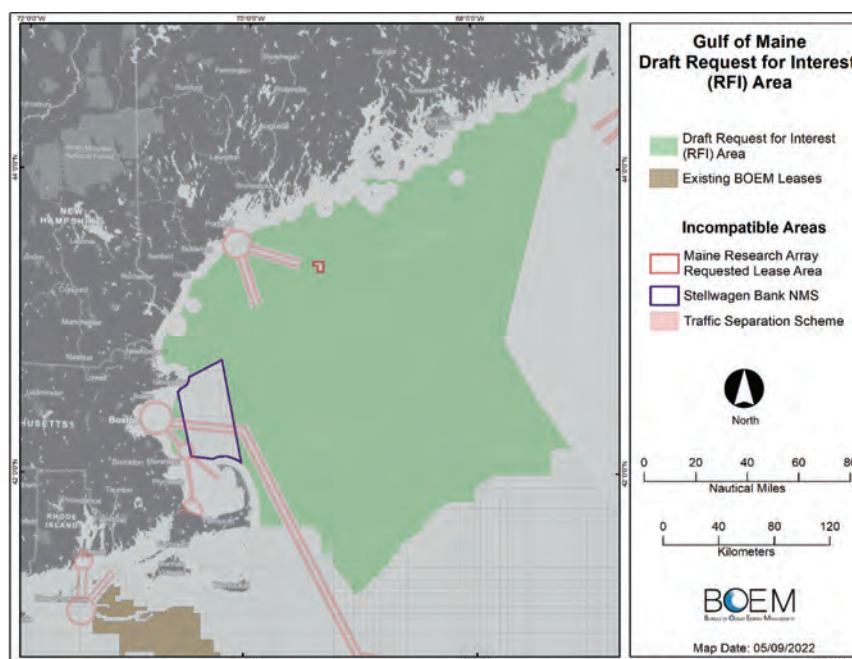


Figure 2: DRAFT RFI Area following the removal of incompatible areas from the Planning Area.

- and Scope (i.e. anchor type, quantity and design)
  - i. Cable types, transition points, substations
- p. Other technical factors such as distance from shore, electricity demand, existing grid interconnections, etc.
- q. Other uses of the OCS
  - i. Alternative offshore energy (e.g., wave, tidal)
  - ii. Aquaculture
  - iii. Whale watching
  - iv. Recreational vessel traffic

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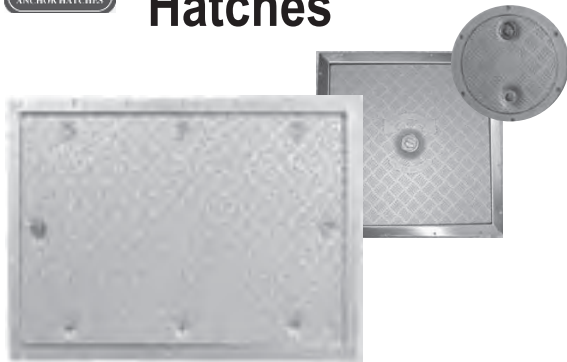
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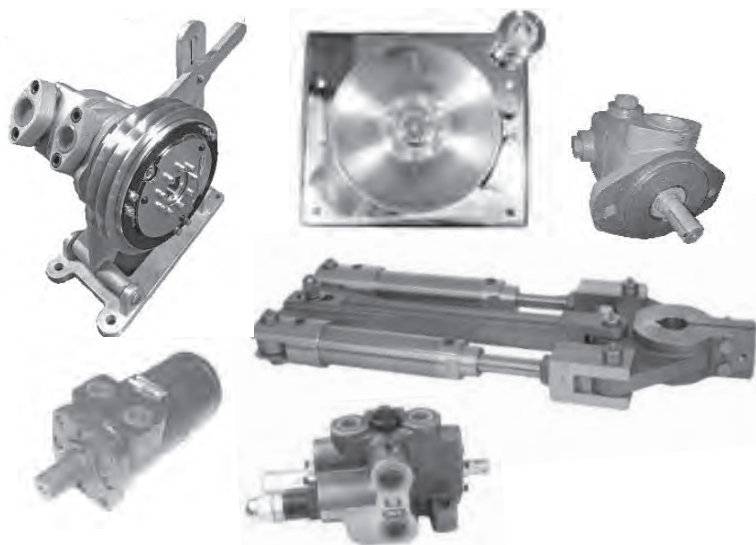
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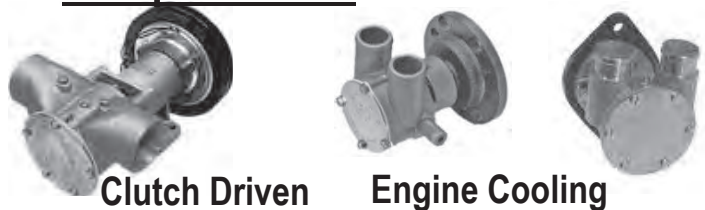
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# Rhode Island / Massachusetts Hydrographic Survey 2022

Ocean Surveys, Inc. (OSI) is anticipating an upcoming nautical charting survey of Rhode Island Sound and the approaches to Newport (see project map) in support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The available bathymetric data in the survey area is almost all over a century old, with the most recent survey conducted in the 1930's. The bathymetric and feature data acquired as part of this project will be used to update National Ocean Service nautical charting products and services.

*This survey project is not related to offshore wind development.*

To complete this project, OSI plans to mobilize three survey ves-

sels in June/July of 2022 (see vessel descriptions). The survey vessels will operate 7 days per week (weather permitting) until data acquisition is complete in August or September of 2022. Two vessels will operate 12 hours per day; one vessel will operate 24 hours per day on multiple 10-day trips. Each vessel will be equipped with 400 kHz multibeam echosounders mounted on fixed pole mounts.

OSI is dedicated to maintaining positive interactions with the local fishing community. The nature of the planned operation carries some risk for gear interactions (particularly fixed gear interactions) as survey vessels are actively moving across the survey area



*MV Northstar Challenger*

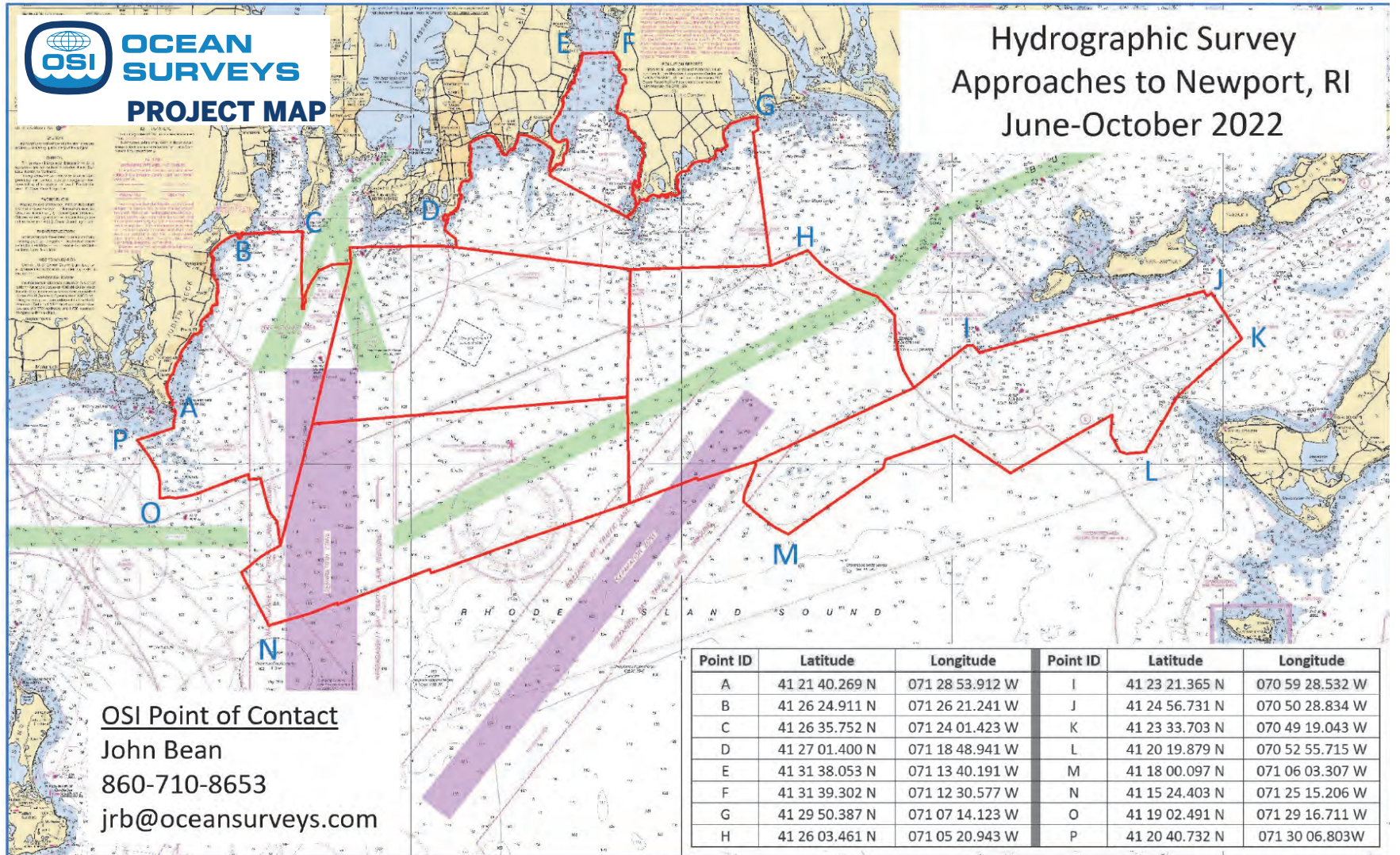
LOA 92 ft.

Call sign: WDG5396

MMSI: 367546220

Official No. 1043939

**SURVEY VESSEL**



*RV North Cove*  
 LOA 34 ft.  
 Call sign:  
 MMSI: 338392514  
 Registration. CT 9011 BM



**SURVEY VESSEL**

on a closely-spaced set of planned lines. To prevent and/or mitigate negative interactions, OSI will be taking the following steps:

- Submit a Local Notice to Mariners to USCG District 1 outlining the project area, describing each survey vessel and its plan of operations, and containing OSI contact information (completed on 6/3/2022).
- Maintain open and frequent communication with fisheries

representatives as the operation proceeds.

- Use feedback from the fisheries community as a guide for what to expect, when and where, with respect to fishing gear/activities.
- During operations, keep a sharp lookout for trap-buoys, high-flyers and fishing vessels and keep a safe distance.
- Monitor VHF channels 13 and 16.
- Be mindful of the impact of

*RV South Cove*  
 LOA 31 ft.  
 Call sign:  
 MMSI: 338444001  
 Registration. CT 8013 BN



**SURVEY VESSEL**

current on the presentation of buoys and the direction of warp lines.

- Note or mark the position of buoys and fishing activity for future planning and for managing night-time operations.
  - Plan nighttime operations such that survey lines are run in areas without visible fishing gear.
- In the event of a gear interac-

tion (e.g. snagging a pot buoy), OSI will:

- Mark the position of the encounter and note the time and operating condition in the acquisition log.
- Obtain identifying information (e.g. buoy color; permit number; vessel name).
- Notify the appropriate fisheries representative in a timely manner.



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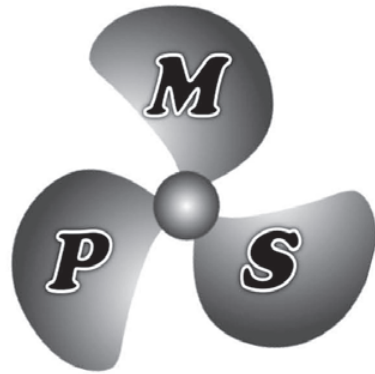
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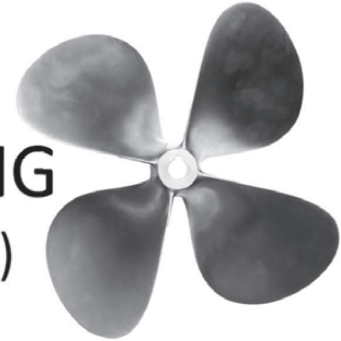
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# American Lobster Settlement Index | Update 2021

Compiled by: R. Wahle, A. Goode and K. Kleman

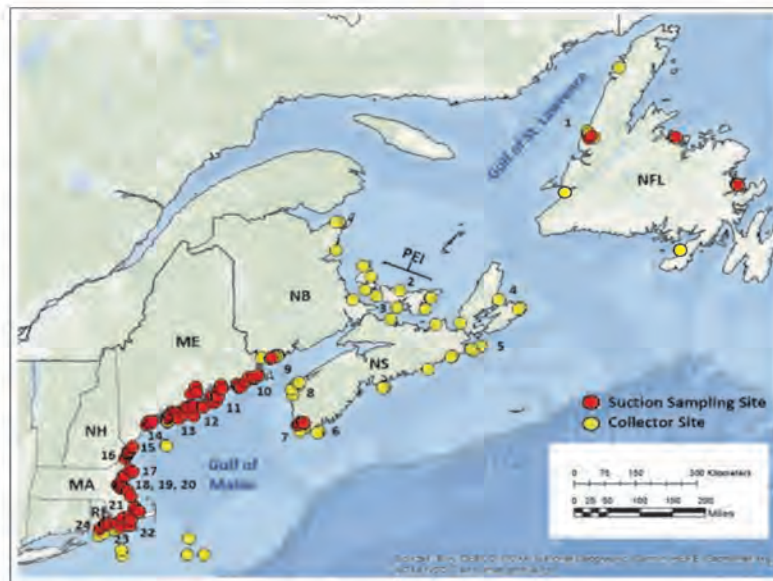
**Participants:** ME DMR (K. Reardon, R. Russell), MA DMF (D. Perry, T. Pugh), C. Brown (Ready Seafood Co.), J. Drouin (Little River Lobster Co.), RI DMF (S. Olszewski, C. McManus), NH F&G (J. Carloni), DFO Canada (A. Rondeau, N. Asselin, J. Gaudette, P. Lawton, S. Armsworthy, A. Cook), UNB, St. John (R. Rochette), PEIFA (L. Ramsay, M. Giffin), PEI DAF (R. MacMillan), Fishermen & Scientists Research Society (S. Scott-Tibbets), Memorial University (A. Le Bris)

<http://umaine.edu/wahlelab/current-projects/american-lobster-settlement-index/>

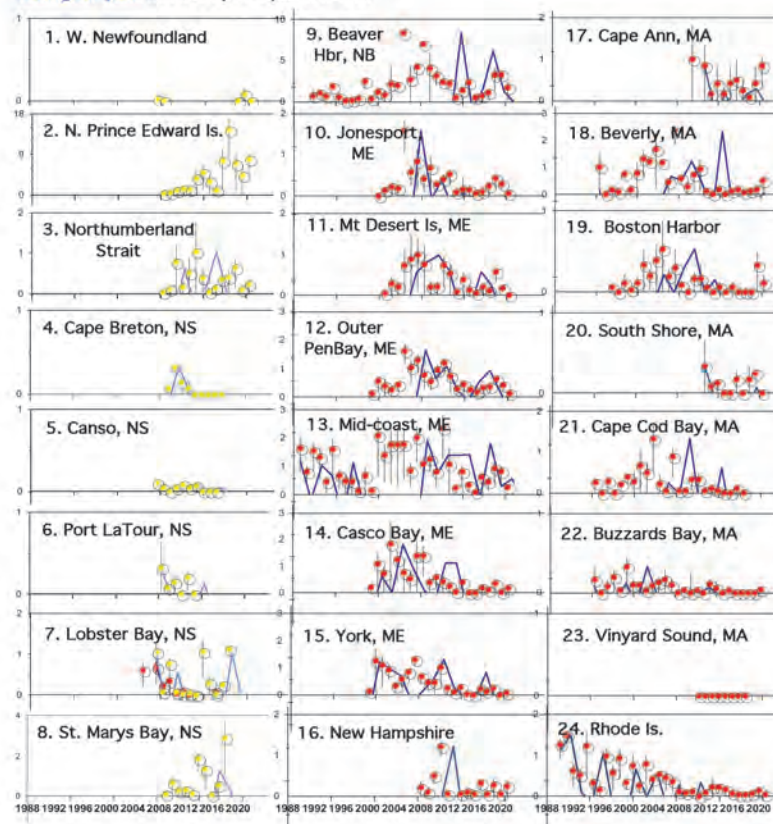
At the close of 2021, the US and Canadian lobster industry was emerging from the second year of the pandemic with relatively steady landings volume, but dramatic increases in total value as lobster prices soared. Maine's 2021 harvest saw a modest 10% increase in volume over 2020, but it boasted a 75% spike in total dollar value. Same in Canada: with nearly steady landings volume, the Maritime provinces enjoyed a 48% surge in value, topping CAN\$1 billion. Quebec and Newfoundland's fishery expanded again by a few percent in volume, but nearly doubled in value! At this writing, southern Gulf of St. Lawrence landing volume also held steady, but value reports were not yet available. Bear mind that along with the apparent windfall in value came significant increases in the cost of fishing with inflating prices of fuel, bait and supplies. With so much happening, there's always interest in the near-term landings outlook, and we continue to evaluate ALSI's ability to provide a projection for the next few years based on the strength of upcoming year classes. In last year's *ALSI Update* we tested the skill of forecasts developed in 2013 to look ahead as far as 2019. In this *Update*, we visit the ALSI-based forecast once again to see how our predictions are affected by aggregating study areas and adjusting for temperature effects and differences in depth-wise patterns of settlement gained from our industry collaborations. First, let's take a look at how 2021 stacked up.

**Settlement 2021:** The ALSI sampling teams from Rhode Island to Newfoundland persevered through the pandemic to cover virtually all locations except Cape Cod Bay and Vineyard Sound, MA where sharks continued to be a risk to divers. Nova Scotia discontinued sampling in 2019.

In general, 2021 settlement was similar to recent years (**Figure 1**). In Newfoundland, settling young-of-year remain on the fringe of detection at this northern extreme and none were counted in 2021, but the building numbers of older juveniles (not shown) is a positive sign of continued recruitment to coastal nurseries. In the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the north shore of PEI and Northumberland Strait saw a modest uptick. New Brunswick's Fundy shore and most of the Gulf of Maine remained at historically low levels, except for the Massachusetts north shore, which saw modest upturns. South of Cape Cod, settlement remained at historic lows where they have been for more than a decade.



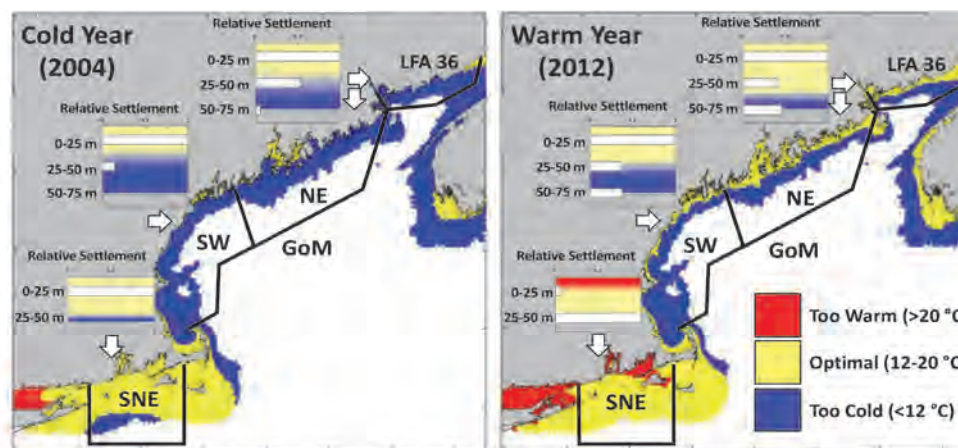
Young-of-year lobsters per square meter



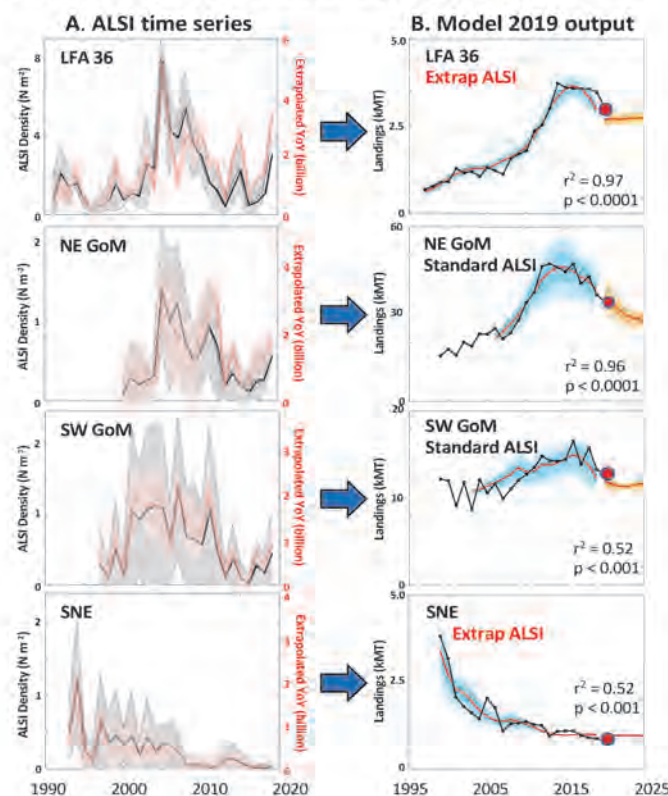
**Figure 1.** ALSI sampling in New England and Atlantic Canada. Diver-based suction (red) and vessel-deployed bio-collector (yellow) sampling locations and corresponding time series of young-of-year (YoY) settlement for selected groups of sites in 24 study areas from Rhode Island to Newfoundland.

**Forecast update:** In last year's *Update* we evaluated the skill with which the ALSI-based forecast of 2013 predicted landings out to 2019. We showed the analysis for 6 of 9 areas to illustrate that the forecasts accurately predicted landings for most of the areas, but we underpredicted landing for others, such as northern MA and LFA 36 where landings were higher than predicted based on settlement density alone. For those cases we speculated a subsidy of lobster might be immigrating from outside areas.

With this year's *Update* we continue to tune our previous forecasts by accounting for settlement at depth and aggregating some areas into larger, more inclusive, spatial units. We credit our industry collaborators for their help deploying deep-water collectors that provide critical insight on depth-wise patterns of settlement as they related to changes in the thermal regime by depth along the coast. **Figure 2** above illustrates how the optimal thermal habitat for lobster settlement changes under warm and cool summer thermal regimes; two contrasting years are presented. In a cool regime, typical of earlier years, suitable thermal habitat covers large areas and into the protected bays of SNE, but is restricted to nearshore areas further north into the GoM. Under the warm regime, optimal habitat recedes from shallow bays south of Cape Cod, just as it expands in northeastern areas. The inset graphs in **Figure 2** illustrate the availability of thermal habitat over a range of depths and the relative settlement of lobster over those depths based on collector deployments.



**Figure 2. Changing habitat.** Habitat suitability in southern New England (SNE), the Gulf of Maine (GoM) and Fundy (LFA 36) based on lobster optimal thermal range inside 100 m depth. Inset bar graphs depict relative settlement strength at 3 depth strata based on industry deployed collectors.



**Figure 3. Model 2019 (A)** Standard (black) and depth-extrapolated (red) settlement index for aggregated areas. This is the primary input to the ALSI predictive model. The model, represented by a simple arrow here, accounts for regional differences in growth and mortality. **(B) Hindcast, forecast** and early **skill assessment** of the 2019 model based on settlement and landings relationship through 2019 (blue segment). The skill of the 2019 forecast (orange) is assessed as landings accumulate. So far, 2020 landings are shown for the four areas (red dots).

In **Figure 3A** we first depict the standard (black) and depth-extrapolated (red) settlement index for the four areas. To the right (**Figure 3B**) are the updated 2019 landings forecasts for these areas out to 2025 using the version of the settlement time series giving the best fit to observed landings through 2019. As with previous forecasts, we continue to account for regional differences in mortality, and variable growth rates such that the prediction for a given year comprises the contribution of a mix of ages ranging from about 5-9 years. These modifications considerably improved the fit to observed landings trends. In fact, the predictions for the GoM are consistent with Maine's fishery-independent surveys, and the trends in the NE GoM even align strongly with landings trends in SW Nova Scotia (LFA 34). In the two cases where the area size remained unchanged, LFA 36 and SNE, adjusting for depth-wise settlement improved the fit to observed landings, but did not entirely resolve the under/over-prediction problem. Data are still limited on depth distributions and habitat use for settlers, and work remains to better inform these forecasts.

Nonetheless, our 2019 model for the more inclusive areas that account for settlement at depth are less pessimistic than the 2013 model and project a more moderate decline and a leveling of landings through 2025. Hopes are that the higher price of lobster will help offset those declines. Observed landings volume for 2020 (red dots in **Figure 3B**), our first out-of-model skill assessment for the 2019 model, suggest the longer time series and the new modifications are doing a better job of capturing the dynamics of the fishery. Again, with all same cautions about the uncertainty of forecasting, time will tell. Stay tuned for further updates and a wider application of the forecasts. ☺

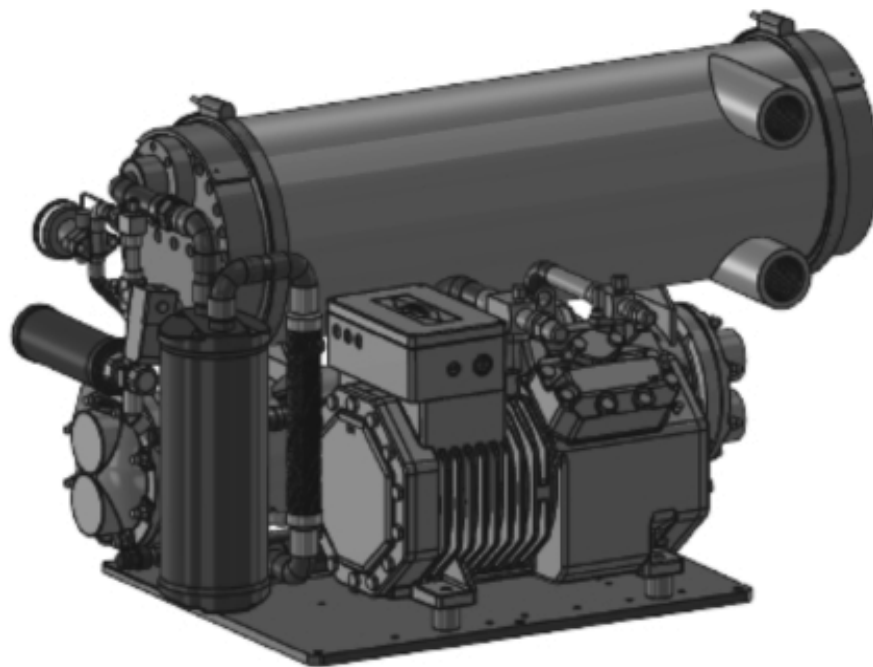




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# Sea Grant, DOE, NOAA Fisheries fund 6 projects for the coexistence of offshore energy with Northeast fishing and coastal communities

This funding opportunity, first announced in March 2021, seeks to catalyze research for the coexistence of marine energy—including wind, current, tidal, and wave energies—with Northeast fishing and coastal communities. The innovative funding partnership applies the Sea Grant model to connect science and tools directly with communities and ocean users.

The selected projects were collectively awarded over \$1.1 million in federal funds, with each project matching 50% in non-federal funds. The two-year projects have roots across the Northeast:

- **Building Capacity for Participatory Approaches to Community Resilience and Ocean Renewable Energy Siting** (Project Lead: Heather Leslie, University of Maine, Orono, ME) will characterize values and beliefs in three communities to understand where ocean renewable energy is a good fit for people and place, and develop a community toolkit with maps, surveys, and participatory practices that can be applied across the Northeast.

- **Can Proprietary Commercial Lobstering Data be Used to Inform Offshore Wind Development?** (Project Lead: Kate Beard-Tisdale, University of Maine, Orono, ME) will create a standardized procedure for constructing representations of the Maine lobster fishery using data and knowledge from individual fishermen, and develop data product models and sample products that will inform fisheries management and marine spatial planning.

- **Community Engagement and Stakeholder Perceptions of Floating Offshore Wind** (Project Lead:

Alison Bates, Colby College, Waterville, ME) will develop a stakeholder database, survey tools, and holistic outreach strategy to evaluate community perceptions of offshore wind, identify the capacity and necessary conditions for stakeholders to coexist with offshore wind, and present recommendations for equitable solutions.

- **Evaluating Messaging, Communication Networks, and Public Engagement on Offshore Wind Development in Southern New England** (Project Lead: Emily Diamond, University of Rhode Island, South Kingstown, RI) will analyze public engagement strategies, messages, networks, and sources used to communicate and engage communities and stakeholders in decision-making for proposed offshore wind projects, and incorporate community perspectives to make recommendations for effective and equitable messaging and strategies.

- **Regional Community Attitudes Regarding Procedural and Distributive Justice Dimensions of Southern New England Offshore Wind Development** (Project Lead: David Bidwell, University of Rhode Island, South Kingstown, RI) will assess community concerns and research questions regarding procedural, distributive, and recognition justice dimensions of offshore wind projects in southern New England, and work to address barriers within and among communities to ensure equity and well-being for a just energy transition.

- **Achieving Community Resilience by Optimizing Symbiotic Offshore Renewable Energy and Food Systems** (Project Lead: Maha Haji, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY)

will develop a mapping tool for spatial planning allowing for the integration of multiple ocean uses in the same area. The goal is to enable symbiosis between renewable energy and food systems and empower stakeholders, fishers, aquaculture farmers, and developers to make informed decisions for long-term resilience.

“The United States has abundant wind and water power resources along our coastlines that can help our nation, and our coastal and marine communities in particular, reach a 100% clean energy economy with net-zero emissions no later than 2050,” said Kelly Speakes-Backman, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the U.S. Department of Energy. “At the same time, we recognize communities and local economies depend on the ocean for their livelihoods and way of life. Through this research partnership with the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium and NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center, we can better understand and optimize these shared uses of the ocean.”

“The Northeast Sea Grant programs are pleased to be partnering with the DOE’s Wind Energy Technologies Office and Water Power Technologies Office, and NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center to fund research on this timely topic, which we hope will provide decision makers with guidance on how different users of resources in the marine environment in our region can coexist,” stated Matt Charette, Director of the Woods Hole Sea Grant program.

As the United States continues developing and deploying offshore renewable energy technologies, the Northeast Sea Grant Consortium

and federal partners will continue to engage the public and decision makers in collaborative research that supports resilient communities and economies.

“NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center has joined Northeast Sea Grant Programs and Department of Energy to advance needed socioeconomic research,” said Jon Hare, Science and Research Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center. “Understanding the social and economic connections between offshore wind energy and existing ocean users such as commercial and recreational fisheries is critical to supporting coastal communities.”

To effectively translate the results of the funded research for use by communities, NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center designated \$350,000 in federal funding in parallel with the research projects. As part of these efforts, Northeast Sea Grant program extension staff will work directly with fishing communities and other stakeholders to provide scientific, legal, and policy research support in response to fishing community needs.

This research and extension will benefit a variety of ocean users and stakeholders by providing the community-focused tools required for equitable and sustainable development of the Northeast’s coastal and ocean resources.

[https://seagrant.mit.edu/2022/05/19/six-ocean-energy-projects-announced/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://seagrant.mit.edu/2022/05/19/six-ocean-energy-projects-announced/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

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## STELLWAGEN COUNCIL ON MANAGEMENT PLAN, WINDMILLS, WRECKS AND WHALES



The Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) held its 65<sup>th</sup> meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>. This time it was an in person meeting held in Scituate, MA. After the normal introductions, there was a fairly long presentation given by an MWRA representative on water quality issues which included results of contaminants, chemicals, outfall discharges and other environmental issues and how it effects Mass Bay.

There was a review of the ongoing development of the Management Plan. This Plan is due out in mid-fall. It will be the Final Plan. It was noted that it could limit fishing??. include protected resources issues but will not come with any surprises!! SAC member Bill Adler questioned whether the Sanctuary planned to try and manage fisheries. The answer was NO. As always and still, the Sanctuary can't manage fisheries under its authority. It can request that the Federal Fishery's Council and NMFS do something because of some Sanctuary's concerns, but alone, it can't put rules in place. Bill through all the years he's been on the SAC has always reiterated his objection to having the Sanctuary seek a

change to its charter to allow it to manage fisheries on the Bank.

The next agenda item dealt with the shipwreck avoidance program. This has been an ongoing program to alert fishermen as to where shipwrecks are located and try to have fishermen avoid hitting and getting tangled in them. The program has apparently worked so far with fishermen once notified and they have been trying to avoid the areas. Of note however, scallop boats have destroyed the remains of the *North Star*, which was on the NW corner of the Sanctuary. On yet another note here, another wreck on the southern edge on the Bank, the schooner *King Philipp*, has been identified.?! This ship apparently went down in the 1898 gale. A debris field has been located on this ship. No more details on this were available.

The Sanctuary Superintendent, Peter DeCola, reported that he had voiced the Sanctuary's concerns regarding the discharge of radioactive water from the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant, which is being dismantled. He noted that the Sanctuary is opposed to the discharge which is water by the rods themselves and not just the cooling water itself. He was awaiting a response from the EPA and NRC.

The agenda then moved on to the Sanctuary's Work Plan. This involved updates on protection for Right Whales, Maritime Heritage ("shipwrecks"), water quality and other items listed in the Plan. During the lunch break there was a presentation given on a photographic underwater journey on Stellwagen.

The NOAA report dealt with the wind power issues and more on protected species. The

Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) report covered rope-less fishing gear, closures and various research projects being done by the Division.

The Coastal Zone Management (CZM) report focused on proposals on offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine which could include floating windmills (?!). A task force, it was noted, has been formed which will include 84 members from MA, NH and Maine to look at areas of interest. The group will also look at effects on wildlife, habitat, whales, birds, ships and even Dept. of Defense areas?!

SAC member, Bill Adler, again brought up the windmill issue. He said, "if I were to build a power plant on shore, a small one, what megawatts would it be expected to generate?" The answer was, roughly 400 M.G.!!" Ok, what does a windmill generate?!! The answer was 8-15 M.G. Bill then asked, "so how many windmills will be needed so I don't have to build mine on shore generating plant?" No answer, but do the math! The report on wind power also indicated that there can be radar interference if fishing among or near windmills but this can be fixed.

The USCG report noted that it will be focusing on enforcing the whale rules and safety issues. The NOAA enforcement report noted that it too would be working on Right Whale ruled enforcement and indicated that it had 2 patrol vessels.

There were no important comments from the so-called "round robin" agenda items, nor from the public comment agenda items. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25PM.

*Bill Adler-Commercial Fixed Gear-SAC Member*

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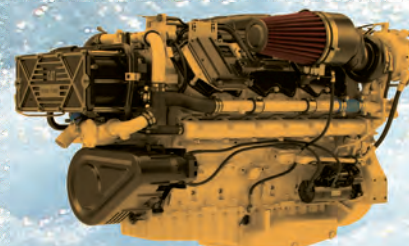
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