



November 18, 2015

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**Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
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To Whom It May Concern,

After attending a recent BOEM public outreach meeting in New York with regards to the proposed New York Call Area wind facility, I wish to submit the following written comments on behalf of Seafreeze Ltd:

Seafreeze Ltd is a seafood production and processing company located in Davisville, Rhode Island which, along with our sister company Seafreeze Shoreside located in Point Judith, Rhode Island, employs approximately ninety five people. We have serious concerns about the location of the New York Call Area, from both a safety and a fishery perspective. We also have serious concerns about the lack of correct fishery and economic data in BOEM's database for the area.

Provided at BOEM's New York outreach meeting were confidential images off more than 25 vessel chart plotters, detailing concentrated trawl fishing effort in the NY Call Area. All of these images demonstrate squid fishing activity, with the exception of one Seafreeze vessel's mackerel fishing activity and one scallop vessel's activity in the area. They are by no means comprehensive and represent only a snapshot of the intensive fishing effort that takes place there. Not every tow is marked and many tows get deleted periodically to ensure clarity of the chart, making true effort much higher. It is important to also keep in mind that these charts only represent a fraction of the fleet of vessels fishing in the proposed wind farm area. However, it is clear that the fishing industry relies heavily on the area.

The majority of the vessels represented are Rhode Island vessels. This is problematic considering that BOEM's current data did not recognize any Rhode Island port as being significantly affected by the proposed wind facility, particularly with regards to squid. Rhode Island is the squid capital of the East Coast and considerable amounts of product is harvested in the Call Area. The port that would be hardest hit by the siting of the proposed wind facility would be Point Judith, not only because of the number of Rhode Island squid vessels who fish in the area but also the fact that many New York and other state's squid vessels land their catch in Point Judith.

The BOEM estimate of loligo squid value harvested in the Call Area is off by orders of magnitude. The current BOEM five year average (2007-2012) of annual squid revenue generated from the proposed site is approximately \$123,000. However, in 2012 alone, approximately \$4 million worth of squid was harvested in that specific area in four weeks of fishing. Attached are one vessel's confidential VTRs, plotter tows in the area, and multiple corresponding dealer reports from that same time frame, demonstrating nearly \$200,000 worth of gross revenue to a single vessel. (Although not all dealer reports were obtained, the average price per pound of product can be expanded to estimate total revenue). This vessel now lands nearly 100% of its squid in Point Judith and is a customer of Seafreeze Shoreside.

One of our vessels is a member of New England groundfish Sector 13, which keeps records of all member vessel activity. In this sector alone, the totals of loligo squid landed out of statistical area 612, in which the overwhelming majority of squid landings are harvested in and around the Call Area, are as follows:

2010- 149,030 lbs	2012- 1,288,835 lbs	2013- 345,264 lbs
2011- 733,957 lbs	2014-963,568 lbs	2015 – 300, 787 lbs

Similar records exist in other groundfish sectors. Although groundfish sectors may or may not be comprised of vessels with squid permits, and level of squid fishing activity is variable depending on vessel composition within the sector, the cumulative landings of all these sectors combined are significant. Sectors 5, 7 and 9 have these combined totals for loligo landings in statistical area 612:

2010- 129,033 lbs	2012- 703,343 lbs	2014- 262,830 lbs
2011- 988, 035 lbs	2013- 156,980 lbs	

Important to bear in mind is that not all squid vessels belong to groundfish sectors, so these above numbers are not comprehensive. But they do serve to indicate that the revenue information that BOEM has relied on with regards to the Call Area is egregiously inaccurate. The average price for fresh squid is \$1.00 per pound to the vessel. Certain individual vessels depend on the Call Area for ¼ to 1/3 of their annual income.

The cumulative economic impacts of the squid fishery extend far beyond the initial revenue to the vessel, particularly to Rhode Island. As stated above, Rhode Island squid vessels as well as many out of state squid vessels land their catch in Point Judith. This generates revenue to the vessels but also to the port. For every pound of squid that comes across the dock of a dealer, the dealer also receives revenue. This revenue generates jobs for dock workers, management personnel, processing personnel and maintenance personnel. It also generates employment for shipping personnel and the trucking companies which distribute the product. Significant revenue is also generated through cold storage facilities for the product. Vessels which utilize the port generate port berthing fees and support local fuel companies, electronics companies, trawl gear companies, and engine repair companies.

Squid landed in ports outside Rhode Island is often brought to Rhode Island for processing. Several Rhode Island dealers purchase significant amounts of squid landed in New York and other states and ship the product to Rhode Island, where it is processed and distributed. Seafreeze Shoreside annually handles millions of pounds of squid. It packages and freezes millions of pounds of this squid for itself and other dealers. Of this product, over a million lbs every year is then kept in cold storage at Seafreeze Ltd until ready for further processing into tubes and tentacles for consumption by the public.

The loss of a primary inshore squid fishing ground has huge economic implications for Rhode Island fisheries and businesses. Specifically labeled “Rhode Island Calamari” and “Point Judith Calamari” are found on restaurant menus up and down the East Coast. Seafreeze brand squid is in demand worldwide. The official Rhode Island state appetizer is calamari. If the New York Call Area is leased for development, a significant percentage of inshore squid landings will be lost, and the ecological implications of loss of squid grounds may have a severe impact on the squid fishery as a whole.

The ecological information on which BOEM and the New York Department of State have relied for siting the NY Call Area is also lacking and/or incorrect. The NYDOS Offshore Atlantic Ocean Study completed in July 2013, utilizes squid data from the Northeast Fishery Science Center’s trawl survey. This survey cannot accurately sample the area for squid because its cruises are limited to early spring and mid fall, not when the squid seasonally appear in the area. Therefore the squid are missed by the survey. Furthermore, due to the random selection of survey stations, samples within the Call Area are either sparse or nonexistent.

See http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/femad/ecosurvey/mainpage/fbts_cr.html . The area is not surveyed by the NEAMAP inshore survey, which means that the NEFSC survey is the lone contributor to survey information. Prior to siting of the Call Area, intensive year round sampling for an extended period of time should have been conducted to determine the area’s productivity.

BOEM’s fact sheet entitled “Socio-Economics of Fishing Related to Wind Energy Development: Applied Science for Informed Decisions on Ocean Energy” states, “During operation, the offshore structures will likely serve as refuge and hard bottom substrate for fish and prey.” However, this translates into a negative for squid. Squid prefer area without structure, particularly sand, and the introduction of structure and hard bottom will alter their ecosystem. Structure will attract a host of new predators to the area which prey on squid and squid eggs. At the same time, the scour and sedimentation created by operational wind turbines have the potential to suffocate and kill eggs and larvae. Squid live for approximately nine months, dying once they have spawned inshore. If the scour and sedimentation of wind turbines kills off the next generation of eggs and larvae, there are no adults left to reproduce, leading to potential major stock collapse. As no studies have been completed on the ramifications of

wind turbines in prime squid ground, it would be environmentally unsound to destroy this historic habitat and possibly cause reproductive failure of the species.

Additionally, the BOEM Fact Sheet states that bottom trawl gear “may not be able to fully utilize the developed area”. All squid fishing vessels operate with bottom trawl gear, and the fact is that no bottom trawl vessel will be able to access the area at all. Trawl vessels do not tow in straight lines, but need the ability to turn, follow depth contours, avoid up to 20-40 other squid vessels fishing the area, and avoid the many hangs present in the Call Area which have the potential to destroy gear worth tens of thousands of dollars per boat. To operate in a wind facility which would require only straight tows would be impossible and unproductive. This is also due to the fact that each vessel is towing its net extensive distances of wire out behind the vessel itself. This intrinsically limits maneuverability in a grid of solid structure, especially when dealing with cross winds, cross currents, tides, etc. Therefore, all tows inside the wind facility would be completely lost.

In New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s November 12, 2015 letter to the U.S. Maritime Administration regarding the veto of the proposed Port Ambrose LNG project, he acknowledges the importance of the squid fishery and access by commercial vessels to their squid fishing grounds. He references “risks and disruptions” which would make it “difficult for commercial fishers who rely on seasonal access to support their activities”, and the “impact” to “New York’s fishery for longfin squid, commercially important and present in the project area.” We applaud this consideration of impact to the commercial squid fishery, which is not limited to New York but encompasses even greater Rhode Island based activity. Now that BOEM and the NYDOS have been made aware of the inaccuracy of their current data, provided with new and more accurate data of the reliance of the commercial squid fishery specifically on the New York Call Area, we look forward to similar consideration.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 is clear that offshore energy projects are required to “ensure” provision for... “safety”, “protection of the environment”, “conservation of the natural resources of the outer Continental shelf”-including the squid stock, “protection of correlative rights in the outer Continental shelf”, “prevention of interference with reasonable uses...of the exclusive economic zone”, and “consideration of...any use of the sea or seabed, including use for a fishery”. The siting of the New York Call Area not only has very negative potential impacts to the squid resource, and would severely interfere with one of the most lucrative inshore squid fishing areas on the East Coast, it also has very real safety ramifications.

The squid fishery in the New York Call Area has been operating for decades despite heavy transit in the vicinity. The New York shipping lanes are some of the busiest in the country. However, until this point, the New York Call Area was a safe place for fishing vessels to escape potential collision. With the introduction of a wind facility, this safe zone will be removed. Fishing vessels will be forced to haul back their nets in the actual shipping lanes, a process during which the vessel is unable to move and takes roughly half an hour. The 20-40 squid boats which frequently fish the area will be forced into extremely hazardous, life threatening, situations. Vessels transiting the shipping lanes are not accompanied by a US pilot in the vicinity around the Call Area; pilots only board these vessels much closer to New York Harbor. That means that when a tanker or other vessel is transiting around the area, they may not have an English speaking person at the radio or the wheel, making communication between the fishing vessels and shipping vessel impossible. Furthermore, tankers, etc., often move at high speeds and would need to alter course many miles in advance of approaching a group of fishing vessels in order to avoid collision. The New York Call Area is not a safe place to site a wind facility given the density and composition of current users.

Of additional concern is the interference with marine radar caused by wind turbines. A 2013 report prepared for the US Department of Energy found that “[O]ffshore wind farms do raise some concerns for other stakeholders. These new concerns include marine navigation and communications...sonar and subsurface acoustical monitoring systems, and coastal HF radars....Marine navigation radars... may experience interference under certain proximity and operating conditions as the result of typical wind farm configurations. Pre-deployment investigation is warranted. Mitigation measures may be required.”

See http://www.ioos.noaa.gov/hfradar/assessment_offshore_wt_effects.pdf. Wind turbine technology has expanded since 2013, and newer, larger turbines may cause additional interference. Not only would a wind facility interfere with fishing vessel subsurface sonars and sounders, it would pose a significant safety hazard to fishing vessel radar when operating close to the facility. This hazard is compounded by the heavy traffic of the surrounding shipping lanes. Again, the New York Call Area is not a safe location for a wind facility.

Accordingly, we recommend the rejection of the New York Call Area as an appropriate wind facility site.

Sincerely,

Meghan Lapp
Fisheries Liaison, Seafreeze Ltd.