

RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: Atlantic

Planning Area(s): Mid-Atlantic

Title: Collaborative Fisheries Planning for Virginia's Offshore Wind Energy Area

BOEM Cost: \$109,000

Other Contributions: \$127,400

Total Project Cost: \$236,400

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2016

Conducting Organization(s): Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program.

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Description:

Background: In 2013, the [Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean \(MARCO\)](#) began work with Rutgers University to map important commercial fishing areas in the Mid-Atlantic region. These "Communities at Sea" maps integrate NOAA's Vessel Trip Report (VTR) and vessel permit databases to produce heat maps that explicitly link fishing communities (defined by home ports and gear types) with the ocean places where they spend the most time (fisher days). Although these maps are informative and depict the majority of commercial fishing efforts, some fisheries are not represented. Additional direct interaction with the fishing industry will be critical to understand the extent of any potential impacts from offshore wind energy development.

This project will build upon the current efforts to regionally map important commercial and recreational fishing areas by filling data gaps and fine tuning the data in and around the Virginia wind energy area (VA WEA). The project team will also work directly with fishermen to build upon the [regional mitigation measures and best management practices](#) (BMPs) identified in recent BOEM workshops to create recommendations specific for offshore Virginia development.

Objectives:

- Through a collaborative effort with fishermen develop accurate, fine-scale maps of important fishing areas in and around the VAWEA.
- Build upon BOEM's [Development of Mitigation Measures to Address Potential Use Conflicts between Commercial Wind Energy Lessees/Grantees and Commercial Fishermen on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf Report](#) by soliciting input from fishermen that utilize the area in and around the VA WEA to provide recommendations for a communication plan and other BMPs that may be appropriate for commercial wind facilities off Virginia's coast.

Importance to BOEM: Gathering input directly from the fishing community and giving them an opportunity to help design BMPs in relation to the construction and operation of offshore wind energy facilities will assist in understanding and addressing social and environmental impacts. Additionally, this work will reduce potential development risks by gathering information about concerns before developers submit construction and operation plans to BOEM for approval.

Current Status: The study was awarded on September 17, 2014. A workshop was held in September 2015 to gather input from the fishing community, U.S. Coast Guard, and Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

Final Report Due: February 29, 2016

Publications: None.

Affiliated Web Sites:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/OceanPlanning/FishingandVirginiaOffshoreWind.aspx>

Revised Date: December 2, 2015

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp