

# Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area Development Trap, Pot, and Fixed Gear Fisheries

Jan. 5, 2022, 10AM- 12PM via Zoom

## Meeting Summary

*This meeting summary is not intended to be a complete transcript or record of the meeting proceedings but rather serves to capture the high-level themes and issues discussed. 50 attendees were present. The presentation shown during the meeting can be found on the project website: <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/central-atlantic-activities>*

## Meeting Purpose

- Provide information and answer questions about the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leasing process and the proposed Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area for offshore wind development off the coast of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.
- Gather broad feedback and input from trap, pot, and fixed gear fishing communities on the initial draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area.

## Welcome and Introductions

Jim Bennett, Program Manager for the Office of Renewable Energy Programs at BOEM, welcomed participants and provided an overview of the agency and their Offshore Wind (OSW) energy goals. He discussed the meeting's purpose, which was to hear the fishing communities' thoughts and concerns on the areas BOEM is looking at for the draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area. He emphasized BOEM's hope to work collaboratively with members of the fishing industry throughout this process, and the organization's commitment to transparency about what areas they hope to work in and who will be impacted. Mr. Bennett emphasized that the Central Atlantic has been identified as a key area for OSW, and this conversation is happening early in the process so that BOEM can take the input of fisheries and other stakeholders into full consideration. He concluded by thanking the participants for their attendance and noted how important their feedback will be to BOEM's decision-making process.

Patrick Field, a facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute, welcomed attendees, thanked them for their participation, and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

## Presentations

### Overview of BOEM's Renewable Energy Development Process and the Central Atlantic Draft Planning Area

Bridgette Duplantis, Program Analyst at BOEM, introduced the Central Atlantic Planning Area off the Atlantic Coast between Delaware and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Ms. Duplantis explained that the original draft Planning Area has already been winnowed down to Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3 to avoid conflicts with existing uses and impacts to biological resources. She explained that feedback from stakeholders at these engagement meetings will help BOEM whittle down the

Planning Area into a Call Area, and then that Call Area will also be winnowed down. So far BOEM has held meetings with each affected state (VA, MD, NC, and DE) and collected data from these states and several federal agencies.

### Fishing Activity in the Central Atlantic

Brandon Jensen, BOEM Fisheries Biologist, gave a presentation about the current data BOEM has on fishing activity near the Planning Area. Most of the activity related to pots and traps is concentrated in Planning Area 3 and at the shelf break between the planning areas. They have recorded a number of pot and trap fisheries operating there. Gillnet activity takes place up to the shelf break and in Planning Area 3, but not in Planning Area 1 or 2. Mr. Jensen discussed the revenue intensity of fishing activity in the area and explained that a bulk of the revenue happening is north of Planning Area 3, which also has a high concentration of commercial fishing.

### Discussion

After Bridgette Duplantis concluded the presentation with a summary of project milestones, next steps, and upcoming opportunities to provide public input, Patrick Field invited attendees to share feedback and questions. Several attendees shared comments and questions with the project team on a range of issues. Key issues and main concerns raised in the discussion are summarized below:

#### Planning and Lease Areas

- There was a question asked about why there is a section off North Carolina that will not be able to be leased after 2022. A BOEM representative explained that while they would be unable to lease after June of 2022 under a Presidential Moratorium, the State of North Carolina has requested that BOEM continue the planning effort and identify any suitable wind energy areas off North Carolina's coast.
- Questions were raised about the estimated size of the final Leasing Areas. Mr. Bennett answered that BOEM typically targets areas large enough to host a wind farm (about 80,000 acres), but the planning areas will be winnowed down to lease areas based on a number of factors going forward.
- Community members asked what amount or kind of data would be needed to decide what areas end up getting used, specifically, what will factor into their decision to not use certain areas. Mr. Bennett explained that BOEM takes many factors into account as to why they choose certain areas and not others.

#### Impact on Fisheries

- Concerns were raised about implementing any structures in or around Planning Areas 1 and 2 because those are frequent fishing grounds, including for highly migratory species. It will be important to know what magnetic footprint the wind turbines would cause because fish migrate based on magnetic currents and fishermen need to anticipate migratory patterns.
- There was concern about fishermen's ability to fish along the shelf edge if area 3 came too close to the shelf or areas 1 and 2 had any transmission through the shelf break.
- Fishermen explained that their work is highly dynamic and unpredictable with gear and

working areas and even species changing from month to month and year to year and that constructing static structures in their fishing zones would make fishing their work extremely challenging if not impossible.

### Floating Wind Technology

- Ms. Duplantis explained that areas 1 and 2 would be floating wind technology, and BOEM is still assessing the feasibility and logistics of floating wind technology in these areas. Because of that, these are areas of interest and a possibility, not a certainty.
- Mr. Hooker explained that areas 1 and 2 would need a different kind of transmission and is still being worked through. These areas would involve floating technology and maybe different transmission methods than the fixed technology expected in area 3.

### Data Collection

- Concerns were raised about relying on VTR data because it is relative to where fishermen start, not necessarily representative of where they end up. When asked why some of the maps shown used VTR data instead of VMS data, Brain Hooker, BOEM Marine Biologist, explained that they used the data they had the longest time series for, but BOEM also has access to VMS data and could provide that information. He also said BOEM would be glad to accept any data and additional information the fishing community could provide to include it in their analysis. The VTR data that was submitted to the Central Atlantic is not all the VTR data that is available (it just represents a part of the data).
- Attendees urged the importance of including 2020 and 2021 data in their analysis because there is a lot of activity in the mapping areas and many businesses rely on that area. For example, the 2021 data would show millions of pounds of squid came out of the Planning Areas.
- Requests that BOEMs data be made publicly available so that fishermen can compare their data against BOEMs.
- Fishermen expressed skepticism of sharing their confidential business information and data with BOEM. When they gave this information in the past it was ignored, so it is unlikely people will be as willing to share their data this time.

### Public and Stakeholder Engagement

- Multiple community members stated disappointment in how fisheries have been included in development processes and expressed concerns that BOEM is moving too quickly without taking adequate time to listen to the concerns of fishing industry stakeholders about the planning area.
- Requests were made that BOEM make their presentations and meeting registrations more easily accessible to the public (list links on BOEM website, for instance).
- Concerns were raised about the way BOEM released their Planning Area data because it was during the holiday season and during mitigation reports. This was problematic and stressful for many fishermen. Several people were upset that there were only two days scheduled for fisheries engagement.

## Process Timeline

- Ms. Duplantis noted that if anyone would like to make formal comments or give additional feedback, they can send any data or concerns to her email where she will consolidate these comments for the task force meeting in February.
- Some asked if this meeting would be recorded and where to find the formal record of this meeting. Ms. Duplantis noted that these meetings are not recorded but shared that a meeting summary will be made available to the group and that attendees will be invited to provide feedback on the meeting summary. She added that there will be several other opportunities to submit comments throughout the process.
- Concerns were brought up about the probability of comments made in January impacting the draft call areas if they were to be drafted by the end of the month. Ms. Duplantis said they would be compiling comments after this meeting to present to the Task Force and there would be additional opportunities to comment at and after the Task Force.
- Some suggested that a meeting be scheduled for the end of January to continue the dialogue between BOEM and the fisheries. Mr. Hooker said the meetings were scheduled in this manner to get comments from stakeholders before the task force meeting.

## Conclusion

Patrick Field invited participants to share additional comments via email along with a reminder that a formal public comment period for the project would take place after the task force meeting in February. He shared that the project team will share the presentation slides and meeting summary with participants.

Jim Bennet, BOEM, thanked attendees for their time, comments, and questions.