

## Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study

Field	Study Information
Title	Capacity Building and Collaboration with the Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes (NT-22-01)
Administered by	Office of Environmental Programs
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Procurement Type(s)	Cooperative Agreement
Conducting Organization(s)	Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
Total BOEM Cost	\$490,000
Performance Period	FY 2023–2027
Final Report Due	September 2027
Date Revised	August 21, 2023
Problem	BOEM needs an improved understanding of the relationships Tribes have with the marine and coastal environments to better assess the potential effects of wind energy development on sites or areas of cultural importance.
Intervention	This study implements a collaborative research effort that addresses BOEM’s information needs and enriches relations between BOEM and the Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes. BOEM aims to do this via adhering to the principles of collaborative research and co-production of knowledge in which these Tribes identify research objectives, methods, etc. <i>jointly</i> .
Comparison	The use of comparison is to be determined, as this study is purposefully designed to be jointly determined by BOEM and the Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes. Comparisons may be supported by the study’s baseline understanding of the Tribes’ cultural properties in relation to the marine environment.
Outcome	Information objectives include documentation of tribal understandings of the marine and coastal environments in relation to culturally important sites and the identification of best practices for Tribal consultation. The major outcome is to inform NEPA and NHPA work associated with pending wind energy development on the Atlantic Coast. The collaborative study process itself is part objective and outcome as it results in the joint development of this research effort, mutually identified objectives (e.g., information needs, practical deliverables/outcomes) of value to Tribes and BOEM, and enriched relationships between the Tribes and BOEM.
Context	The Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes and associated areas in the NE U.S.

**BOEM Information Need(s):** The Atlantic Coast is experiencing a boom in offshore wind energy activity. At present there are no less than 15 developments in the Atlantic’s offshore wind pipeline. For BOEM to meet its responsibilities to Federally recognized Native American Tribes, BOEM must further understand Tribal interests associated with the OCS and the marine environment. As such, BOEM requires baseline

information to document Tribal understandings and utilization of the marine environment and associated key resources to inform environmental assessments and ultimately OCS decision-making. This study aims to meet these needs by using a collaborative research approach that aims to understand the marine environment through Tribal perspectives, and by identifying best practices for government-to-government consultations associated with OCS Wind Energy development activities.

**Background:** BOEM is charged with considering the effects of its approved actions on cultural resources that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The most pertinent of these laws are the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended), and the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) of 1978. Through Section 106 of the NHPA and Government to Government Consultations with the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah (Aquinnah) and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (Mashpee) have identified areas of importance and concern in areas where Wind Energy development is expected to occur. Moreover, high-resolution remote-sensing surveys have identified the presence of ancient, submerged landforms that correlate with both Tribes' oral histories and traditions. Further work is necessary to enable the Tribes to actively monitor and manage archaeological and cultural sites that may be impacted by BOEM approved activities. BOEM will work with and provide support to the Tribes so that research methodologies may be developed to manage and monitor places of cultural and archaeological importance in Areas of Potential Effect. This will include three critical tasks: the development of a GIS database based on technical data from COPs, and the incorporation of traditional knowledge and oral histories; providing support in the formal nomination of Nantucket Sound as a National Historic Landmark; and provide formal training in the identification and documentation of archaeological sites once construction operations are completed. Just as importantly, this study aims to take a further step on that continuum of collaboration toward an equal partnership in co-producing knowledge in further clarifying Tribal interests.

**Objectives:** The overall goal of this cooperative agreement is to develop and provide capacity to the Tribes so that they have the capabilities to manage and analyze the requisite environmental information supplied to them by offshore wind energy developers. Moreover, this will facilitate more effective collaboration between BOEM and these tribes. The specific objectives that will enable BOEM to accomplish this goal during this study are:

- To develop pro-active, best practices for the management of data and information concerning cultural and archaeological places important to both the Tribes. These will include the review and analysis of technical data provided by offshore wind energy developers in support of their COPs for projects located offshore of Aquinnah and Mashpee lands. This information will be used to inventory and monitor adverse effects to those ancient, submerged landforms and traditional cultural properties and associated areas of significance that BOEM must consider during future offshore renewable energy development.
- Incorporate indigenous knowledge and language with remote-sensing and bathymetry data collected from these areas into a model depicting the preservation potential of submerged ancient cultural landforms and associated archaeological resources, as appropriate.
- To work and collaborate with tribal nations to train them to actively monitor and document offshore cultural and archaeological resources that may be impacted as a result of BOEM's approved activities.

**Methods:** The bedrock of this study is a collaborative research approach with the intent of BOEM being partners or co-producers in knowledge production with the Aquinnah and Mashpee Wampanoag Tribes.

This approach has been broadly engaged over the last two decades in various fields such as international development, conservation and development, and Indigenous knowledge studies. There are various degrees of collaboration and measures of success noted in the literature (Isaac 2015; Koster, Baccar and Lemelin 2012; Kothari, Camil and Brown 2013). There are several key hallmarks with this type of research, namely, collaborative creation of the research objective(s) and design. The intent is that all parties are equal partners and have a legitimate influence in the research design, agree with the general direction of the study and have something of value to gain by the completion of objectives.

Specific methods for the study, beyond its collaborative approach, are TBD. Potential research approaches include, but are not limited to the following, a cultural landscape approach, ethnography, and/or cultural modelling. Likely methods include semi-structured discussions, focus groups, participant observation, unstructured discussions, literature/archival review, etc. BOEM will also assist the Tribes with identifying technological and training needs (e.g., GIS mapping and scuba diving training) so they may identify, analyze, and monitor submerged cultural sites.

**Specific Research Question(s):** Overarching queries: How do NE Tribes view and relate to the marine environment (coastal and related lands, and ocean areas)? What are their concerns/understandings of OCS Wind Energy Development (e.g., effects – positive, negative, uncertain)? How can Tribes and BOEM best work together to address the challenges inherent to OCS Wind Energy planning and development?

1. Are there culturally significant submerged landforms that hold significance to the Tribes? Where are they, and what is their significance?
2. Are there specialized or unique Tribal ways of understanding the environment that are of import to Tribes and are not easily translated or understood by non-Tribal members?
3. What are Tribes concerned with regarding the development of OCS Wind?
4. What lessons can be learned about collaborative research from this effort? Are there best practices or useful insights that support successful collaboration?
5. What specialized training do the Tribes need so they can survey and manage their own submerged cultural resources?

**Current Status:** Cooperative agreement awarded to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe in April 2023. A kick-off meeting was held in August 2023.

**Publications Completed:** None

**Affiliated WWW Sites:** None

#### **References:**

- Isaac D. 2015. Values and Co-production: Examining the Interface of Indigenous Peoples' Understandings and Scientific Understandings. University of Waterloo.
- Kofinas G, BurnSilver S, Magdanz J, Stotts R, Okada M., 2016. Subsistence Sharing Networks and Cooperation: Kaktovik, Wainwright, and Venetie, Alaska. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.
- Koster R, Beccar K, Lemelin H. 2012. Moving from research ON, to research With and FOR Indigenous communities: A critical reflection on community-based participatory research. *The Canadian Geographer*. Kothari, A., Camill, P., and Brown, J., 2013. Conservation as if People Also Mattered: Policy and Practice of Community-based Conservation. *Conservation & Society*.