

Addendum to Appendix N Essential Fish Habitat and Protected Fish Species Assessment

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Addendum

A total of up to 142.2 acres will be converted into hard habitat as a result of the installation wind turbine generator (WTG) and offshore substation platform (OSP) foundations. One hundred percent of the WTGs will be installed in soft bottom habitats, creating a permanent conversion of soft bottom to hard habitat. As described in the SouthCoast Wind Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), recolonization rates of benthic habitats vary depending on the types of benthic communities inhabiting the affected area. Some benthic communities will recolonize a disturbed area within several months, while other communities that are not well adapted to regular disturbance may take upwards of a year to begin recolonization. For those benthic communities that are not well adapted to change, it will likely take more than a year for the level of community diversity to return to the pre-disturbed state. More information on the timing of recolonization of benthic habitats is described in Section 3.5.2 of the SouthCoast Wind DEIS.

As described in the SouthCoast Wind's Benthic Monitoring Plan, SouthCoast Wind will survey areas around select WTGs in a Before After Gradient (BAG) design to quantify changes in growth of the benthic community as it relates to structure associated enrichment. A hard bottom assessment will also be conducted post-construction to measure how the epifaunal community changes after construction.

For additional information on the conversion of sandy sediments to hard habitats, please see COP Appendix M.3 Benthic Habitat Mapping to Support Essential Fish Habitat Consultation.