Meeting Summary

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas Fishing Community and Related Industries Engagement Meeting

Wednesday, November 30th, 2022

12:30 – 4:30 p.m. ET

I. Introduction

On November 30, 2022, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) convened a meeting between BOEM staff and the fishing community (and related industries) across the Central Atlantic region to discuss the "Draft Wind Energy Areas" (WEAs). The virtual meeting was held via the Zoom platform for the purpose of sharing BOEM's plans for the Central Atlantic Region including analysis, planning activities and schedules for the draft WEAs in the Central Atlantic.

The meeting's stated objectives were to:

- Share Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Region's upcoming plans and activities on draft Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) within the Central Atlantic region.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to discuss issues related to the draft WEAs.
- Provide information on how public input can be submitted on the draft WEAs.

The meeting agenda is available in Appendix A.

This meeting summary document summarizes input from the fishing community and industry participants. It focuses on discussion rather than the formal presentations made and is not intended to be a detailed transcript. The meeting was facilitated by Kearns & West (K&W). This meeting summary is organized into the following sections:

II. Discussion Highlights

A. BOEM Welcome and Opening Statements

Karen Baker (*Chief – BOEM/Office of Renewable Energy Programs)* welcomed participants to the meeting. She clarified BOEM's role in offshore wind development and reiterated the value of gathering input from stakeholders in the Fishing Community and related sectors as part of the planning activities for offshore wind in the Central Atlantic. Ms. Baker gave a geographic overview of the Central Atlantic region – inclusive of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. She acknowledged that some potential conflicts have already been highlighted within the draft WEAs and noted that concerns heard during the meeting would help BOEM narrow down the final WEAs. Ms. Baker concluded by reminding participants of the active 30-day comment period and thanked them for their input.

B. Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas

Bridgette Duplantis (*Chief – BOEM/Leasing and Financial Responsibility Section*) presented on the development of the Draft WEA in the Central Atlantic region. The presentation included an overview of BOEM's offshore wind planning and analysis process, and the steps have already been completed. Ms. Duplantis outlined the comments and feedback received from recent engagements with stakeholders and industry actors and how that input was incorporated into the draft WEAs. Then, she introduced James Morris from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and asked him to provide additional context on how the original Call Areas were winnowed down to the draft WEAs.

James Morris (*Marine Ecologist at NOAA/ National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS))* highlighted the partnership between BOEM and NCCOS where his team used spatial modeling to support BOEM's development of the WEAs. Mr. Morris explained the NCCOS "Suitability Model" – a model that identifies ocean areas within the Call Areas that offer the lowest potential for use conflict and environmental impacts based upon a series of preordained criteria. Examples of data layers included as suitability sub-models include:

- Various constraints
- National security considerations
- Industry and operations activities
- Natural resources
- Fisheries' use
- Wind capacity

NCCOS and BOEM combined all the sub-models to determine final suitability scores and inform which ocean areas were included in the draft WEAs.

Bridgette Duplantis provided an overview of the eight draft WEAs. Ms. Duplantis walked through the attributes of each WEA within the larger Call Area and explained potential conflicts under consideration. Sarah Vaughn (*National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Coordinator - BOEM/Central Atlantic*) reviewed NEPA requirements relative to decision-making on offshore wind development. She told participants that BOEM is seeking input on its environmental assessment (EA) of renewable energy leases on the Outer Continental Shelf. Ms. Vaughn reminded participants that the EA will analyze certain impacts of leasing activities but will not analyze project-specific layouts or considerations; that analysis will come later in the process once a lease is obtained and a project plan is submitted. Bridgette Duplantis concluded the presentation portion of the agenda by outlining BOEM's projected timeline for offshore wind in the Central Atlantic and providing information on how to submit public comments to BOEM before the period ends on December 16, 2022.

A recording of BOEM's *Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas* can be found at the following link: https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/central-atlantic

Bridgette Duplantis, James Morris, and Sarah Vaughn then opened the floor for clarifying questions specific to the information presented to participants from the PowerPoint slides. A summary of the questions posed and the responses from BOEM and NOAA staff is below.

Question 1: During the presentation on geospatial analysis, it was said that deep-sea coral zones were deemed incompatible for the draft Wind Energy Areas. Areas E and F appear to be in deep-sea coral zones, which can occur in both canyons and broad zones. How is it that Areas E and F are still in consideration?

Response: BOEM has discussed this topic extensively. We initially decided to exclude deep-sea coral observation areas (which can be seen in the draft Call Areas), but we want to leave space to learn what areas the offshore wind industry is interested in. We are leaving Areas E and F open for consideration for now.

Question 2: Will BOEM consider using OUPV/6-Pack operator data for identification of user groups in the future? The VMS data is great and I see that headboat survey data was also used, but in North Carolina most charter fleets fall in the OUPV/6-Pack category.

Response: BOEM will consider this question and does not have a response at this time.

Question 3: Can a presenter please clarify what the color blocks and numbers signify on Slide 45: Fishing Activity?

Response: The five blocks represent quintiles of average fishing activity from 2016-2021. The areas highlighted in orange showcase higher fishing activity while the blue areas signify lower fishing activity.

Question 4: Do any data layers included in the suitability model consider an increased number of fish in the ocean when turbines are built and function as artificial reefs?

Response: No, we only used previous data. To my knowledge we did not include any predictive data for future years.

Question 5: Can you confirm that the only two data sources included in the fisheries submodel were VMS data and headboat survey data? There are other data sources that exist, such as VTR, that could augment the fisheries submodel.

Response: That's correct, VMS and headboat surveys were the two data sources used. We have access to the VTR data but did not include it in the fisheries submodel.

Response: Early in the area identification process we used VTR data to look at the entire planning area. I can reach out to you offline, but some pieces of Area A were discounted using the VTR data.

Question 6: Can BOEM provide an additional map or graphic in a higher resolution for draft WEA E1 to give us a better idea of the area? Additionally, can BOEM include longitudinal and latitudinal lines for these areas? This would give fishers a better sense of how these areas are broken up relative to active fishing activity. It would make commenting by the December 15th deadline much easier.

Response: Another stakeholder, Glenn Delaney, brought up this same point recently. We have a call scheduled with him next week and I invite you to join that call so we can walk through the GIS data within these areas.

Question 7: On Slide 38, the map appears to show conflicts in Area A off the coast of Delaware. Did your model consider the number of active fishers in that area or the income generated from fishing there? Is there a dollar amount that showcases the impact on fishers' livelihoods in Area A?

Response: NOAA Fisheries data was used for assessing Atlantic fishing revenue intensity. BOEM decided early on to prioritize fishing activities over fishing value when mapping, but further analysis of revenue generated in Area A will occur after the NEPA process. What is clear is that Area A has a lot of fishing activity.

Question 8: How many conflicts in Area A involve drag fishing? Is the element of bycatch weighted in to BOEM's considerations?

Response: Scallop and surf-clam fishing were the two highest-intensity fishing activities in Area A.

Question 9: Can you clarify whether BOEM is considering secondary Wind Energy Areas, and if so how are you reconciling secondary areas with high conflict or constraints? The original document included secondary areas, but I have not seen them in the presentations. My concern is that in Area A there are high constraints due to navigation conflicts and high fishing activities.

Response: Thank you for that question, we have another section of this presentation that will discuss the secondary areas and should provide the clarity you are looking for.

Question 10: On Slide 22 (Call Comment Summary) it seems like BOEM did not consider the comments submitted by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission which called for the full removal of Areas B and C because of Virginia's high exposure. Can you clarify why Virginia's comments were not included on this slide?

Response: BOEM is taking all comments into consideration, and I can confirm that we did receive your comments. This slide is meant only as a summary of the comments we received and not meant to be an exhaustive list since we received a total of 66 comments. We apologize that your comments are not reflected in this slide.

Question 11: Does BOEM or NOAA have any intention to capture recreational fishing activity and effort to

include in your modeling?

Response: NOAA does not have a specific data set that encompasses all recreational fishing activity, but we are hoping that fishing-related AIS data will provide some clarity on that.

Response: BOEM would really appreciate any data sets or sources on this topic if any participants have relevant information to share.

Question 12: How did lessons learned on fisheries evaluations during the New York Bight process affect BOEM's process and analysis this time?

Response: BOEM looked at considerations throughout the New York Bight leasing process, including scallop and surf clam use (which was very significant). We also looked at factors such as fisheries revenue, recreational fishing data, and scallop use along the rotational area during the Call for Information process. BOEM will continue to analyze these factors as we narrow these areas down. The NCCOS model is just one piece of information that BOEM takes into account, and while our approach for the Central Atlantic is very similar to the New York Bight process, the NCCOS model is an additional layer for this region.

Question 13: Does BOEM prioritize itself as the lead agency for offshore wind, as well as developers' perspectives, over mission compatibility with other agencies? There seems to be numerous areas identified within the draft WEAs that conflict with other agencies' concerns.

Response: BOEM is still coordinating with the Department of Defense and the draft WEAs were not able to incorporate their full analysis.

Response: BOEM recognizes there is a lot of military activity in some of the draft WEAs and we are working diligently with DoD to ensure offshore wind projects do not interfere. With respect to developers' interests, BOEM decided not to include that as part of the modeling analysis; however, we do look to use industry interest to compare against the model to find the best areas possible.

Question 14: Can you clarify an earlier comment by defining the term "drag fishing?"

Response: Drag fishing refers to the use of bottom-tending mobile gear - including trawl net fisheries as well as surf clam and scallop dredge fisheries.

Question 15: How does the planning of the draft WEAs relate to the George Shuster Horseshoe Crab Preserve? What are BOEM's thoughts on how the horseshoe crabs will utilize the foundation as a habitat and protection from trawling? Will construction be altered or halted during times of horseshoe crab presence?

Response: BOEM has considered the location of the George Shuster Crab Preserve in relation to the draft WEAs. In terms of mitigation measures, if an area is leased that overlaps with horseshoe crabs that will be addressed at the Constructions and Operations Plan (COP) stage of the offshore wind leasing process. Currently we have areas that overlap, but that is something we will look at in the

Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) to think through potential mitigation measures. That level of analysis occurs later in the process.

Question 16: Given the current technology and life cycle of wind turbines, has BOEM quantified the amount of actual acreage of offshore wind to meet the Administration's goals of 30 gigawatts by 2030?

Response: BOEM looks holistically at existing lease area acreage on the Atlantic and that is partially informed by COPs that we have received thus far. We also look at excess capacity from both existing leases and future leases needed to meet the Administration's goals. We also work closely with coastal states to consider their targets (which often change). BOEM strives to balance federal and state wind energy goals. It can be difficult to simultaneously avoid conflicts in WEAs while also guaranteeing enough acreage to achieve these goals. BOEM has made some public statements on existing capacity from current leases, and I believe that number is somewhere around 20 gigawatts with some margin for error. BOEM also takes a conservative approach when predicting energy generated per acre in an effort to not overestimate.

Question 17: Can BOEM confirm the timing of the final lease sale?

Response: Yes, currently the lease sale is scheduled for Q1 2024.

C. Feedback and Dialogue

During this part of the meeting, participants posed questions to BOEM and shared feedback about the offshore wind information discussed in the meeting.

Comment 1: I have concerns about the impacts to primary productivity of the ocean in the WEAs. Large-scale surface heating in areas surrounding wind farms can result in offshore wind farms becoming ecosystem drivers. Productivity in these areas can drop by as much as 10%, which includes plankton and other organisms at the bottom of the food web that affect other animals. That is a huge concern for fisheries and other ocean users, who will no longer be able to effectively fish in WEAs and may see fish stock collapse.

Comment 2: It is disappointing to hear that the comments shared today will not be considered in the official comments. I was not aware of that prior to the webinar starting, and that should have been included in previous emails and on BOEM's website. It is insulting that BOEM's presentations will be recorded and uploaded to the BOEM website but comments from stakeholders will not.

Response: All comments received today will be written down, considered as official comments by BOEM, and will be included in the meeting summary published on our website; however, they will not be posted to Regulations.gov. Comments are extremely beneficial and desired, they just will not be shown on the Regulations.gov site.

Comment 3: This was a great meeting and I appreciate BOEM providing a detailed overview of the process that determines the draft WEAs. Early in the process we felt that BOEM was blindly selecting these areas with no real reasoning behind it after Brunswick County near Wilmington, NC was included where our

prettiest reef for charters to fish is located. We hope to work with BOEM to avoid this situation in other Central Atlantic areas. In the future, please consider the recreational fishing industry and the "6-pack for hire" industry in this process as we are one of the key stakeholders.

Question 18: Area A is the most impacted WEA for fisheries and scallops, yet when Coast Guard lanes were taken away from that area it was deemed suitable for offshore wind development. Were fisheries impacts underweighted in the suitability modeling process?

Response: Each sublayer is given equal weight for suitability; fisheries impacts were not deemed less important than any other data layer. We understand the concern in Area A with respect to fisheries and welcome as much input as possible on this topic.

Comment 4: I am concerned that BOEM is not considering the dollar value of the catch or the impacts of bycatch in Area A. Recreational fishing activity should also be included BOEM's analysis of these WEAs, especially since recreational fishing might take place in a different direction than commercial fishing and may offer additional value to the overall area.

Response: This is not the only opportunity to incorporate fishery revenue data and in the modeling phase we decided to focus on fishing activity early on. NOAA Fisheries did provide BOEM the fisheries value using VTR data in the region north of Area A, and for future steps like the NEPA analysis we will certainly look at fisheries revenue.

Comment 5: Fishers utilize longitude and latitude when looking at maps. In the future, BOEM should zoom in on the WEAs and overlay a longitude/latitude graph to help fishers understand the area. I recommend a 5-mile minutes at the top of the graphic for fishers to reference.

Response: Hopefully you have seen the nautical charts available on the BOEM website. Perhaps BOEM can use a higher-resolution PDF in the future to benefit fishers' review.

Comment 6: We request more quantification of the actual acreage of offshore wind needed to meet both the Administration's goals as well as states' goals. This will help the industry better understand the landscape and allow for more win-win situations where all stakeholders benefit.

Comment 7: It seems like BOEM and the Coast Guard have done a great job deconflicting the proposed consolidated Port Access Route Study (PARS) with the exception of Call Area A, which has a secondary area that cuts through the offshore Delaware Bay to New Jersey approach. That is the only place in the Central Atlantic Call Area that has not been deconflicted. We encourage BOEM to deconflict that to maintain the commercial navigational fluidity in that area.

Comment 8: If possible, the positives and negatives on ocean life and ecosystems should be quantified to illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of offshore wind farms. Because Europe is farther along than the United States with offshore wind, there may be European data sets or other sources of information to help inform that analysis.

Response: Thank you for that comment. BOEM has done a lot of research on European studies, but the Central Atlantic is a unique region with its own oceanography and species diversity characteristics. We also have existing studies at the Block Island wind farm and the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Pilot Study site off Virginia Beach that are looking into the artificial reef effect. We look forward to further studies to better understand these structures in the water.

D. Next Steps

BOEM staff thanked meeting attendees for their participation, reminded participants that BOEM values their feedback highly, and outlined the following next steps in the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas process:

- The meeting summary and recording of BOEM's informational presentation will be shared with participants in the weeks following the meeting.
- Any feedback on the draft Wind Energy Areas should be shared with Bridgette Duplantis (Bridgette.duplantis@boem.gov) by December 16, 2022.
- The Central Atlantic Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting is expected to take place in Spring 2023. BOEM will transmit calendar invitations and meeting materials to interested tribes in advance of the meeting.

III. Appendix

A. Agenda

Agenda

Virtual Meeting: Fishing Community and Related Industries' Feedback Meeting on Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas
November 30, 2022
12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. ET

Meeting Information: Zoom
URL: https://kearnswest.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwucO6pqz4vGtzK1OtfoEDsPsuvn84XAYHI

Meeting Objectives

- Share Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Region's upcoming plans and activities on draft Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) within the Central Atlantic region.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to discuss issues related to the draft WEAs.
- Provide information on how public input can be submitted on the draft WEAs.

Time (ET)	Item	Lead
12:25 p.m.	***Join the Webinar***	• *All*
12:30 p.m.	**Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Statements**	• Karen Baker, Chief, Office of Renewable Energy Programs, BOEM
12:40 p.m.	**Webinar Instructions & Agenda Review**	• Adam R. Saslow, Senior Facilitator, Kearns & West
12:50 p.m.	**Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas** *With an opportunity for participants to ask clarifying questions (noting that the next session offers the chance to opine on the strengths and weaknesses of the draft WEAs).*	• Bridgette Duplantis, Central Atlantic Team Lead, BOEM • James Morris, Marine Ecologist, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), NOAA • Sarah Vaughn, Central Atlantic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Coordinator
1:45 p.m.	***Break***	• *All*
2:00 p.m.	**Feedback and Dialogue** *An opportunity for participants to request additional information on the draft WEAs. Representatives from fishing industry and other related interests will interact with BOEM officials to discuss key concerns, elements that resonate and other issues that arise.*	• Facilitated by Adam R. Saslow, Senior Facilitator at Kearns & West.
4:20 p.m.	**How to Submit an Official Public Comment** *BOEM officials will explain how and when an official public comment may be entered into the federal record.*	• Bridgette Duplantis, Central Atlantic Team Lead, BOEM
4:25 p.m.	**Wrap Up and Next Steps**	• Karen Baker, Chief, Office of Renewable Energy Programs, BOEM
4:30 p.m.	***Adjourn***	• All