

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area Development

Meeting with Maritime Industry Stakeholders
Dec. 8, 2021, 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.

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 members of the maritime industry on the initial draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area.

Welcome and Introductions

Jim Bennett, Program Manager for Renewable Energy Programs at BOEM, welcomed participants and provided an overview of the agency's responsibilities. He discussed the meeting purpose, highlighting the agency's interest in obtaining input as part of the draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area identification, discussing ocean uses and biological and physical resources within the draft planning area, and discussing collaboration opportunities between BOEM and the maritime industry.

Mr. Bennett emphasized the agency's commitment to increased transparency and collaboration with stakeholders and attempt to identify potential impacts and avoid conflicts through engagement with stakeholders early in process. He shared that BOEM has adopted a regional approach to stakeholder engagement and will gather input from stakeholders and the public several times throughout the process. In closing, he explained that BOEM believes offshore wind can successfully co-exist with the maritime industry and reiterated the agency's commitment to engaging with the maritime industry throughout the process.

Patrick Field, a facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute, welcomed attendees and thanked them for their participation. Sixty-five (65) people registered for the meeting. Mr. Field provided an overview of the meeting agenda and shared the following information about the meeting:

- The meeting was intended to be a conversation between BOEM and maritime industry members and representatives. Other attendees were asked to remain in listen-only
- Participation in this discussion is not an endorsement of offshore wind or development of these specific wind energy areas (WEAs).
- Meeting summaries will be drafted without attribution to participants and shared with meeting attendees.

Presentations

Overview of the Renewable Energy Development Process and Draft Central Atlantic Planning Area

Bridgette Duplantis, Program Analyst at BOEM, introduced the Central Atlantic Planning Area which is located more than 20 miles off the Atlantic Coast. She provided an overview of BOEM's four stage renewable energy leasing and areas identification process. She explained that the Central Atlantic Planning Area process is early in the Planning and Analysis phase and that the planning area will be winnowed down into a Call Area and subsequent Lease Areas later in the process. She discussed BOEM's stakeholder and public outreach activities associated with the project which will include a Central Atlantic Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting on February 16, 2022.

She explained that the draft Planning Area has already been winnowed down to three smaller areas to avoid significant impacts to existing uses and biological resources, particularly those near Atlantic Canyons and the Outer Continental Shelf break. She presented several slides showing different data sets that BOEM will consider during the area identification process including vessel transit counts of cargo, tanker, and tug & tow vessels. She concluded her presentation with an overview of process milestones and next steps.

U.S. Coast Guard

George Detweiler, U.S. Coast Guard, delivered a presentation about existing ocean uses and proposed navigational corridors and fairways through and nearby the draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area. He shared several slides showing proposed new and wider navigational corridors, precautionary areas, and fairways included in the Coast Guard's Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) and a supplemental Port Access Route Study (PARS) and explained how they might impact the draft Central Atlantic planning area. In closing, he shared that the Coast Guard is working to revise recommendations and possible regulations and emphasized that the Coast Guard will continue to be in close communication with BOEM and will provide official recommendations at appropriate times in the process.

Discussion

Patrick Field invited members of the maritime industry to share their comments and questions. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to engage with BOEM early in the process and looks forward to engaging with BOEM during future opportunities. Generally, attendees indicated their support for offshore wind development that supports economic growth and vessel safety and shared feedback on the following major themes.

Vessel Data and Growth Projections

- The Norfolk and Hampton Roads ports are very busy, receive cargo that is important to the nation's economy and supply chain, and continue to see forecasted growth for the future.

- Historical data sets cannot predict future navigation patterns or projected vessel sizes.
- 2021 AIS data should be used rather than 2019 AIS data to capture the increase in vessels, particularly larger vessels with deeper drafts. While 2020 was an anomaly due to COVID 2021 should reflect the changing and increasing trend in shipping in this area.
- When the Port of Virginia ship-channel expansion and widening project is completed, future vessels will have 52.5-ft drafts and the port could see 20,000 TEU vessels in the next 10-20 years.
- Support for including a stipulation in the lease agreement that would require the developer to conduct a future vessel traffic study within the planning area during the decommissioning and dismantling phase.

Fairways and Navigation Lanes

- Strong support for the recommendations included in the Coast Guard's Port Access Route Study (PARS), specifically the east-west fairways to the north and south of the existing Dominion site.
- Acknowledgement and appreciation that the PARS was conducted with substantial collaboration and engagement with maritime industry members and other ocean users.
- Commercial fairways should be preserved and if fairways are going to be contained by offshore wind areas, the lanes need to be wider.
- The anchorage areas proposed in the Coast Guard's Port Access Route Study (PARS) should be codified and formalized.
- Offshore development near the Delaware Bay Region should carefully consider navigation lanes and an offshore fairway to reduce conflicts with tugboats and other vessels.

Timing and Coordination with U.S. Coast Guard

- Several attendees expressed concerns that the Central Atlantic development process would not align with the Coast Guard's recommendations because the BOEM process is expected to progress faster than the Coast Guard's maritime rule-making process.
- In response to concerns about the development process timeline and coordination with the Coast Guard, Jim Bennet, BOEM, committed to working very closely with the Coast Guard and looking at the data that is available during the process to make the best decisions possible. He explained that multiple processes and studies are occurring simultaneously and that BOEM cannot wait to make decisions until all information is available and all studies are complete because those are never ending.
- George Detweiler noted that the Coast Guard recommendations are on record and have been shared with BOEM. He noted that the Coast Guard will be asking BOEM to avoid certain areas within the Central Atlantic Planning Area at various points in the process and shared that they have worked closely with BOEM on other developments to refine the proposed lease areas.
- Dave MacDuffee, BOEM, shared that BOEM intends to work with the Coast Guard to identify lease areas that do not conflict or overlap with fairways or the USCG planned uses. He explained that this is early in the process and that the area will change as BOEM gets more information and feedback.

Conclusion

Patrick Field shared that the meeting summary and presentation would be made available to attendees and invited participants to share additional comments via email. He also reminded attendees that a formal public comment period for the project would take place after the task force meeting in February.

Arianna Baker, BOEM, invited attendees to share any information with BOEM that the agency might not have that supports the comments and concerns shared about vessel movement, port volume, and specific vessel movement needs.

Bridgette Duplantis shared that BOEM is working to build an interactive mapping tool to enhance transparency and accessibility to the data that the agency uses to help make decisions for this project which will be available to the public very soon.

Jim Bennet, BOEM, thanked attendees for their time, engagement, and constructive suggestions.