



Gulf of Mexico Renewable Energy Lease Issuance Draft Environmental Assessment

Gulf of Mexico Regional Office

Task Force Meeting

July 27, 2022



Environmental Assessment

- **Analysis ONLY covers the impacts of issuing leases and the associated site assessment and site characterization activities**
 - Meteorological (met) buoys
 - Vessel trips
 - Geological and biological surveys
- **Analysis does NOT include**
 - Specific project layouts
 - Cable routes for specific projects
 - Visual impacts of a project
 - Wind Energy Area (WEA) identification
- **Analysis of *SPECIFIC* projects**
 - Covered later in the process
 - After a lease is obtained and a Construction and Operations plan is submitted
 - Additional opportunities for engagement and consultation

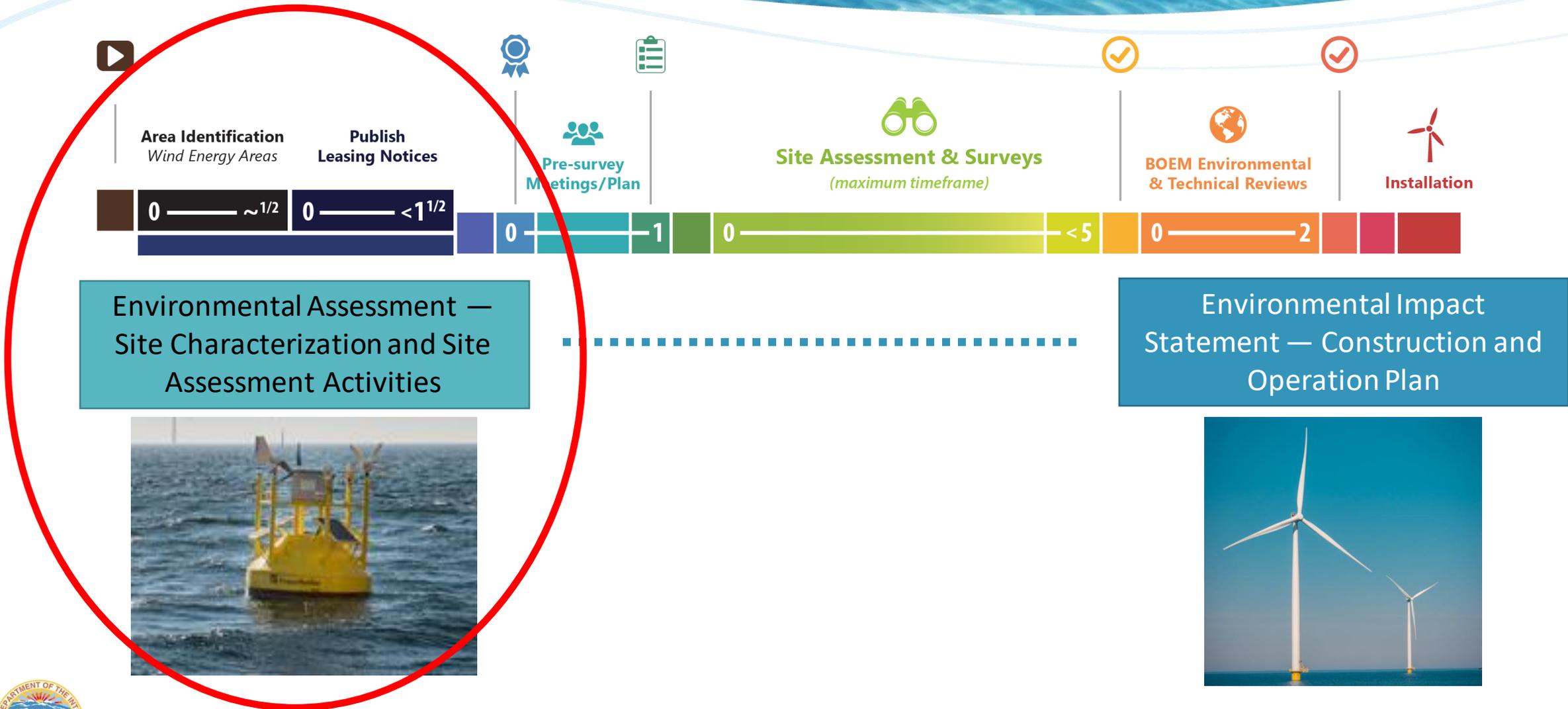


Example of a meteorological (met) buoy

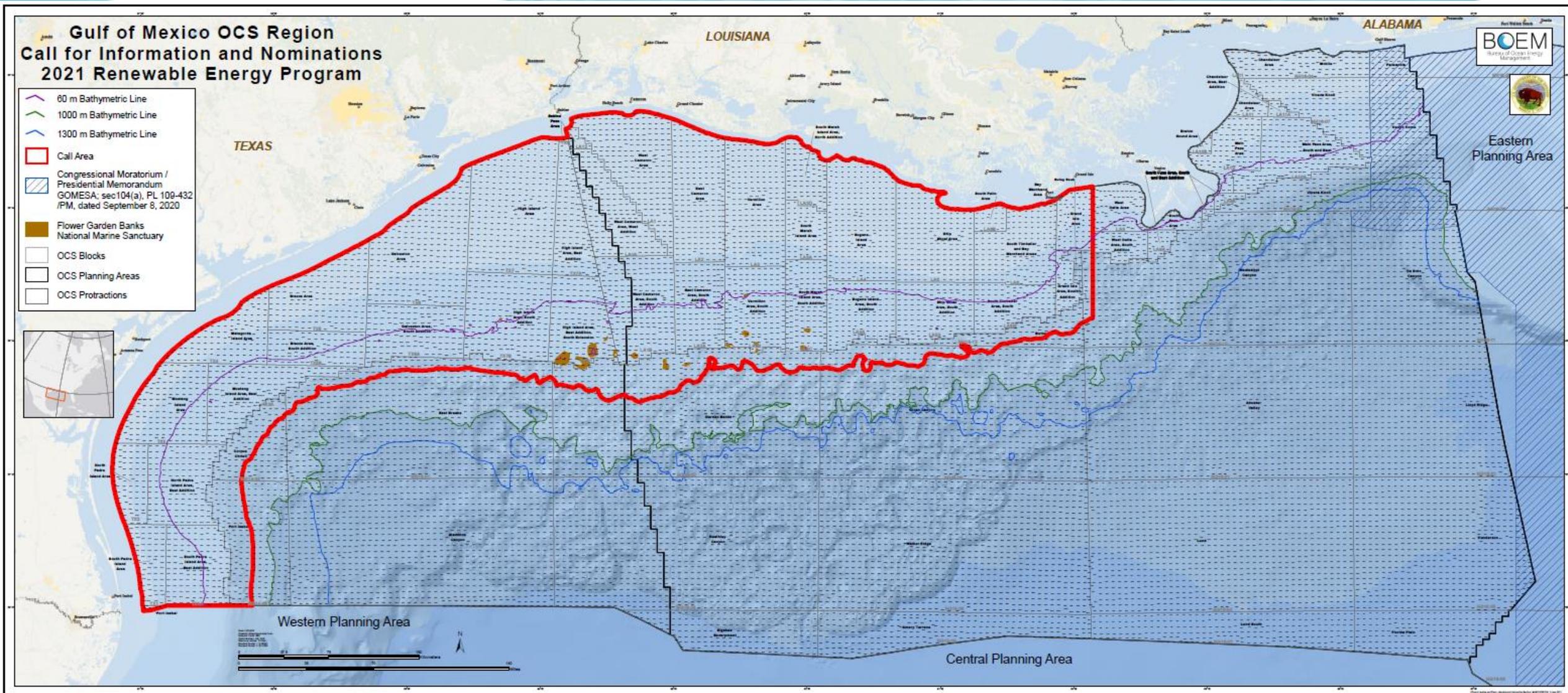
Source: National Data Buoy Center, 2012



NEPA and Offshore Wind

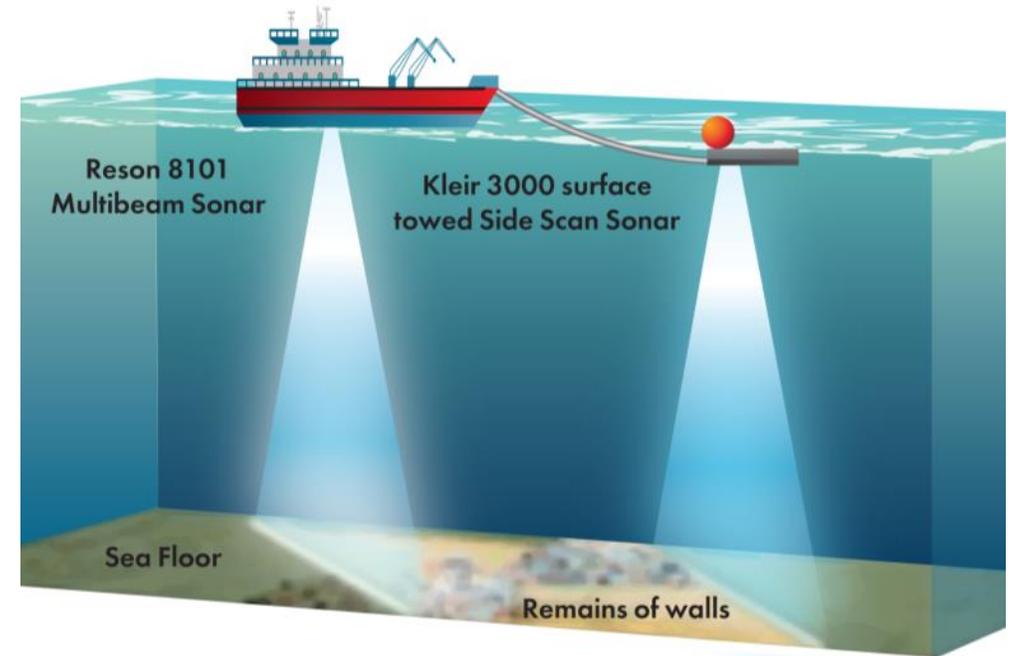


Call Area



Scope of the Analysis

- **EA is a programmatic assessment**
 - May be used for more than one lease issuance
- **Up to 18 leases in the Call Area**
 - Number of leases based on the estimate of foreseeable future activities based on historical trends of an emerging Renewable Energy Program on the Atlantic OCS
 - EA analyzes impacts of
 - A single OCS wind energy lease issuance
 - Issuance of 18 OCS wind energy leases
- **No more than 6-8 leases issued per lease sale**
 - Similar to those issued for Atlantic sales

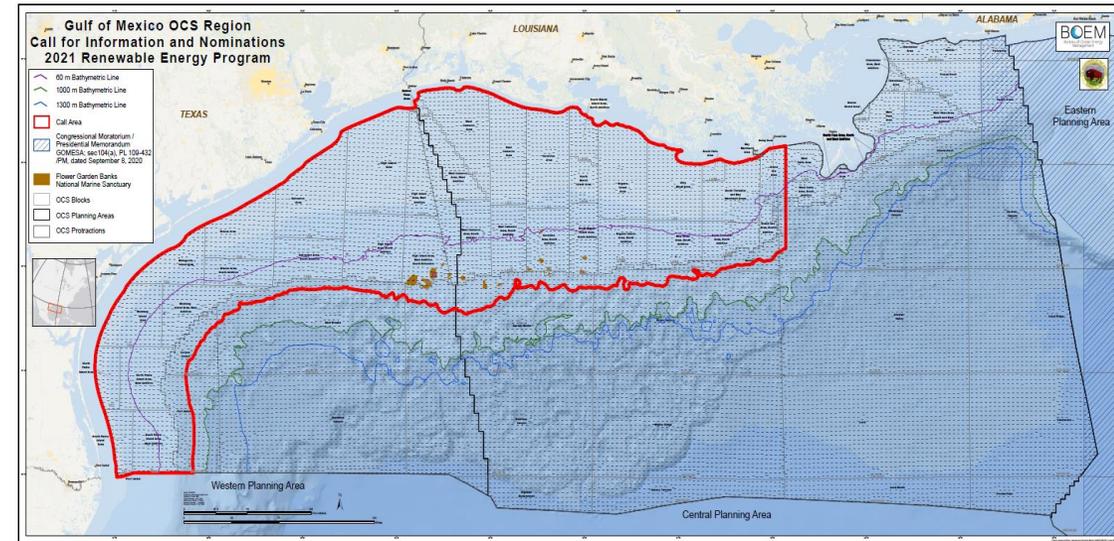


Example of a seafloor survey



Approach for this EA

- **Approach differs from Atlantic wind energy lease issuance EAs**
 - Analyzes the Call Area rather than the WEAs
 - Allows greater flexibility for future identification of WEAs
 - Provides NEPA coverage for non-competitive and research leases proposed in the Call Area
- **Approach more in line with stakeholders in the GOM Region**
 - Familiar with regional NEPA analysis
 - Similar approach to conventional energy NEPA in the GOM Region
 - Analysis for more than one lease issuance
 - Flexibility for ID of several WEAs and lease areas over time
 - Allows for up to 18 leases to be covered in this analysis



Scoping Comments for the EA

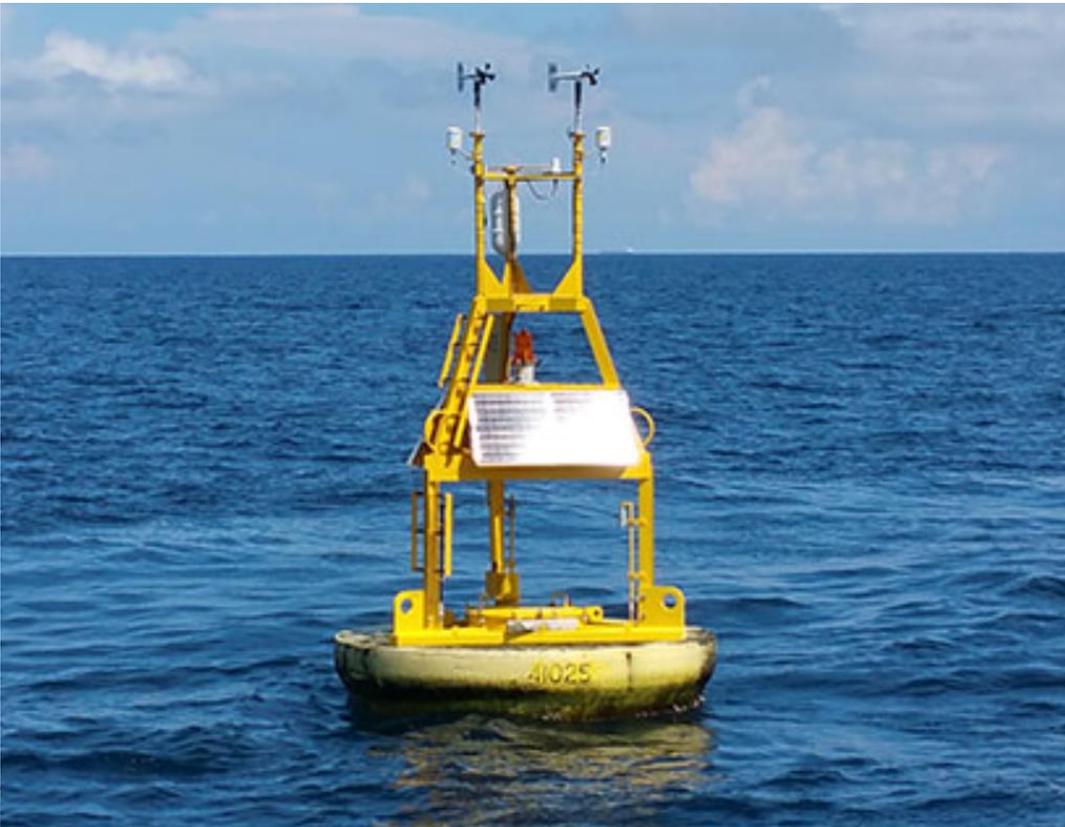
- **Scoping Period**
 - January 11 – February 9, 2022
- **BOEM received 18 scoping comments for the GOM REN EA**
 - Many comments were focused on the development of WEAs and the installation, operation, and decommissioning of a full-scale wind energy project
 - Comments on WEA identification and a full-scale project were considered out of scope for the EA
 - Comments relating to WEA identification have been shared with the Emerging Programs Office
 - Comments on full-scale wind energy projects have been saved for consideration at a later stage in the process
 - BOEM addressed all applicable, in scope comments in the EA
- **BOEM met with interested State and Federal agencies to discuss concerns and begin an open discussion on the future of REN in the GOM**
 - Applicable results of discussions will be used in
 - WEA identification
 - Impact analysis for full-scale wind energy projects (COP stage of the process)
 - Lease stipulations to reduce impacts to resources



Routine Activities Analyzed in the Draft EA

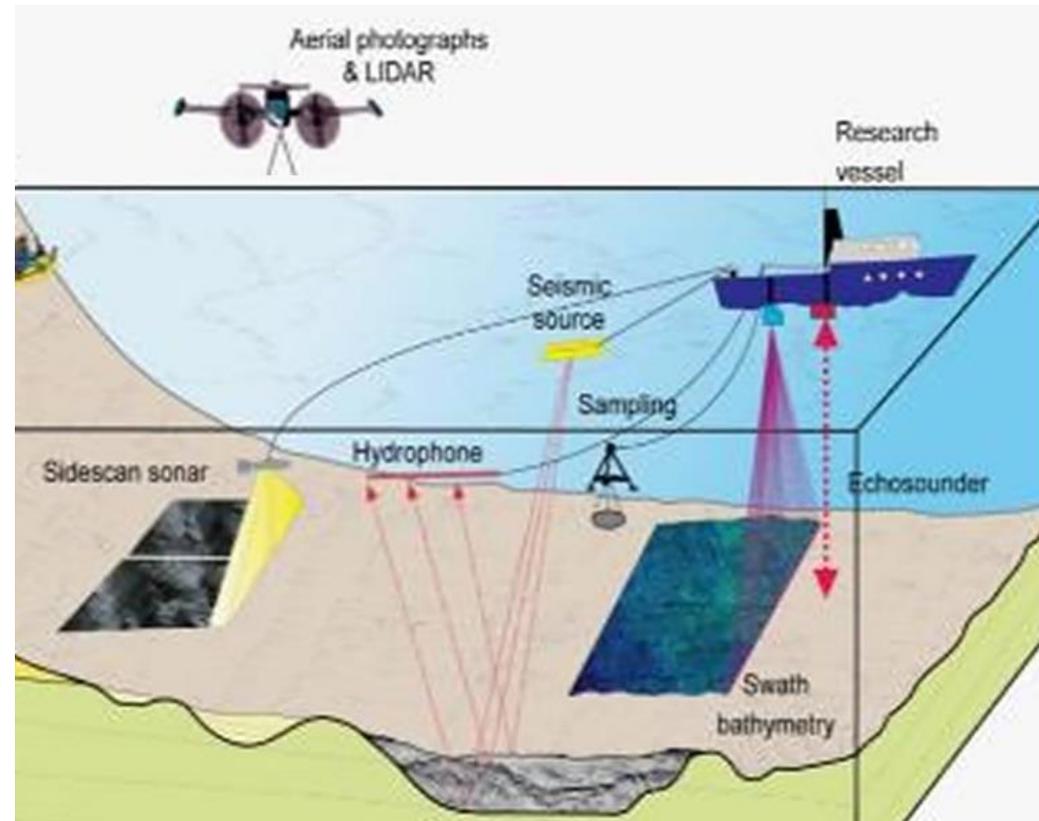
Site Assessment

Temporary placement of meteorological buoys and oceanographic devices



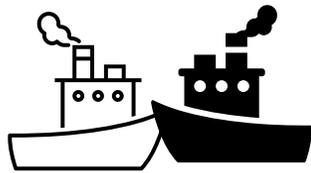
Site Characterization

Geophysical surveys, geotechnical surveys, biological surveys, and archaeological surveys

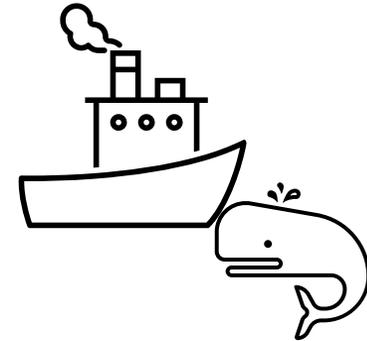


Non-Routine Events Analyzed in the Draft EA

- **Strikes and Collisions**



- Vessel / Vessel and Vessel / Object
- Vessel / Animal
- Entanglement



- **Unintentional Releases into the Environment**



- Spills
- Trash and Debris

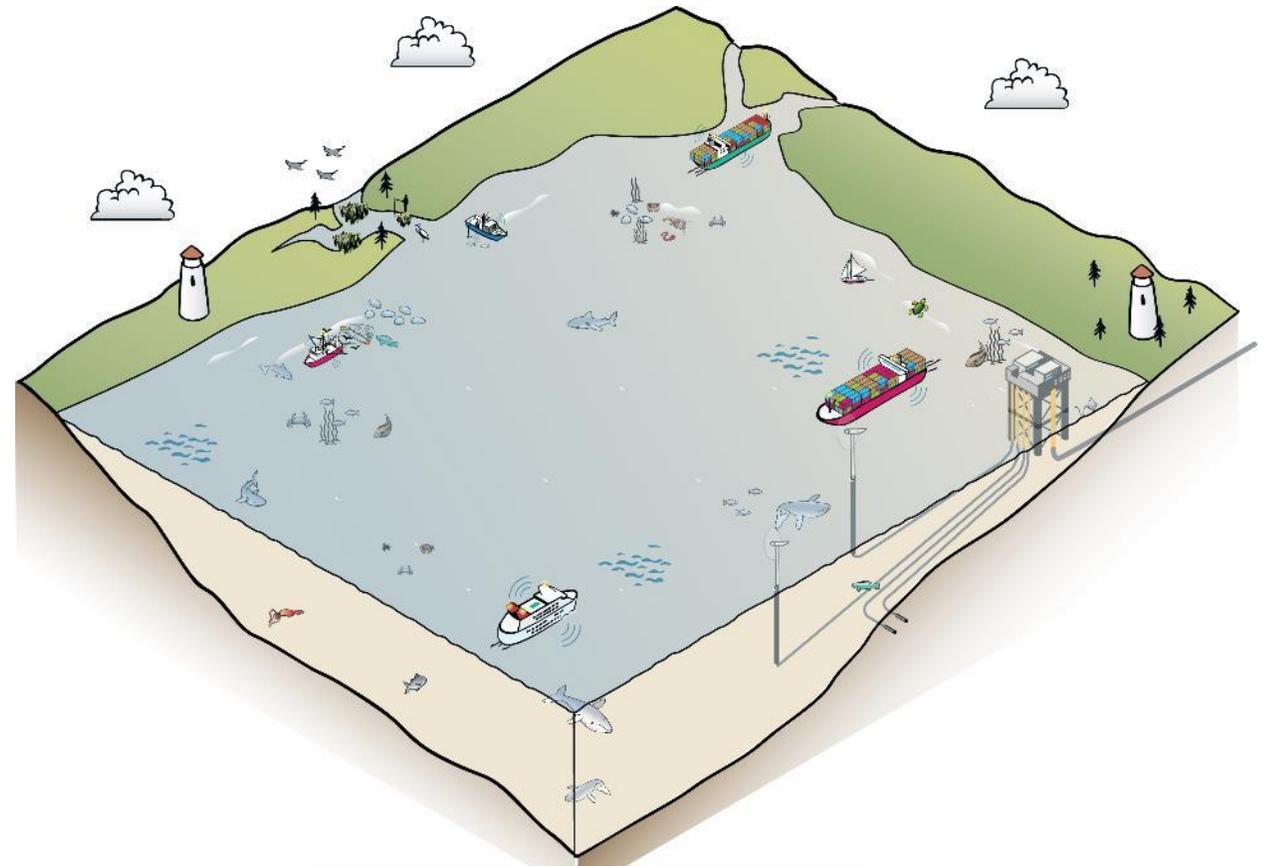
- **Response Activities**

- Spill Response
- Recovery of Lost Equipment



Alternative A: No Action

- Under Alternative A, no wind energy leases would be issued, and site assessment activities would not occur within the GOM Call Area.
- Other ongoing and future planned activities in the Gulf of Mexico would still occur.

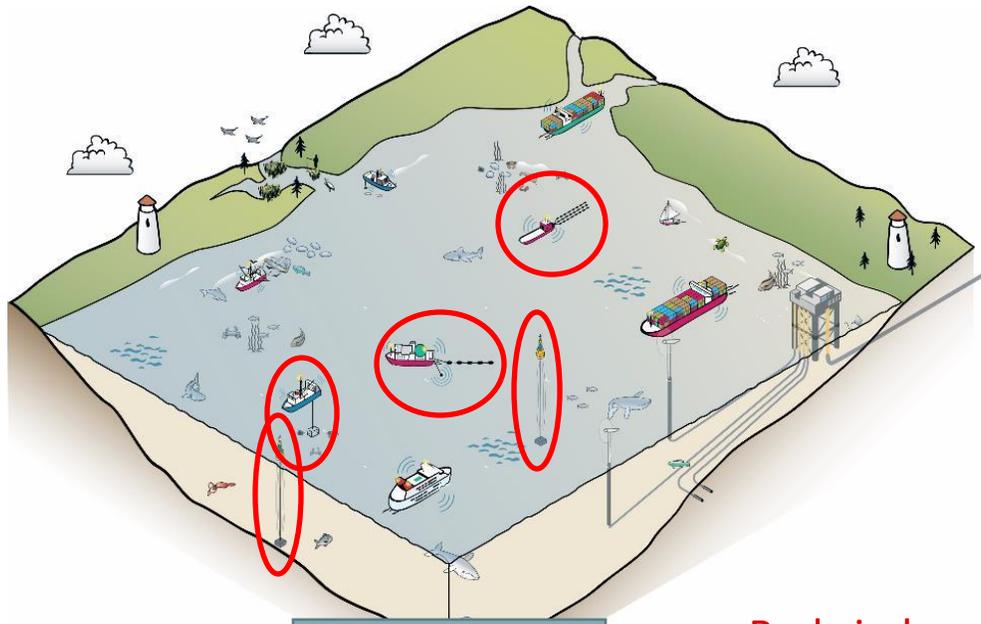


Alternative A: No Action



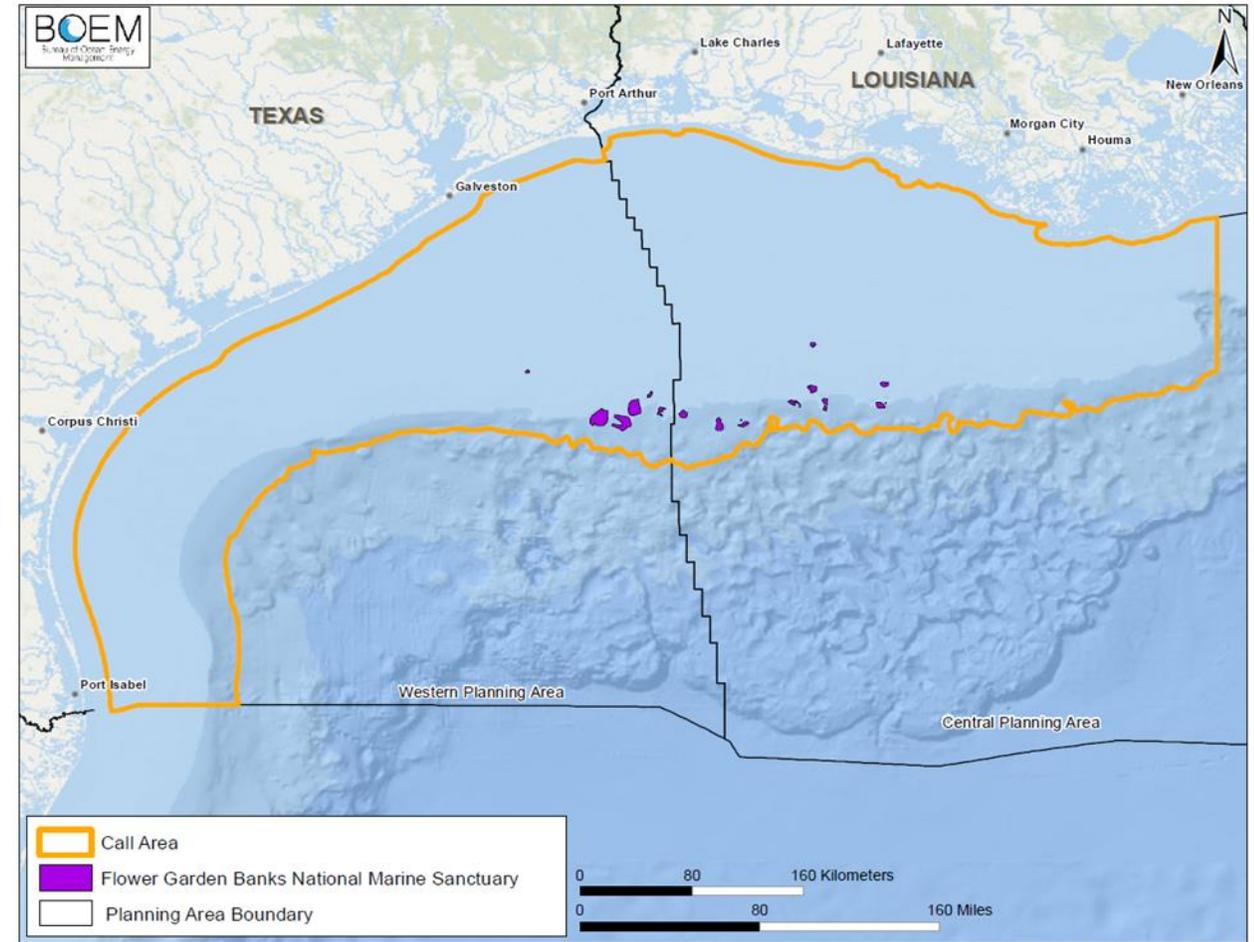
Alternative B: OCS Wind Energy Lease Issuance in the GOM Call Area

- Alternative B would allow for lease issuance within the GOM Call Area.
- All available blocks within the GOM Call Area may be offered, with the exception of whole and partial blocks located within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.



Alternative B

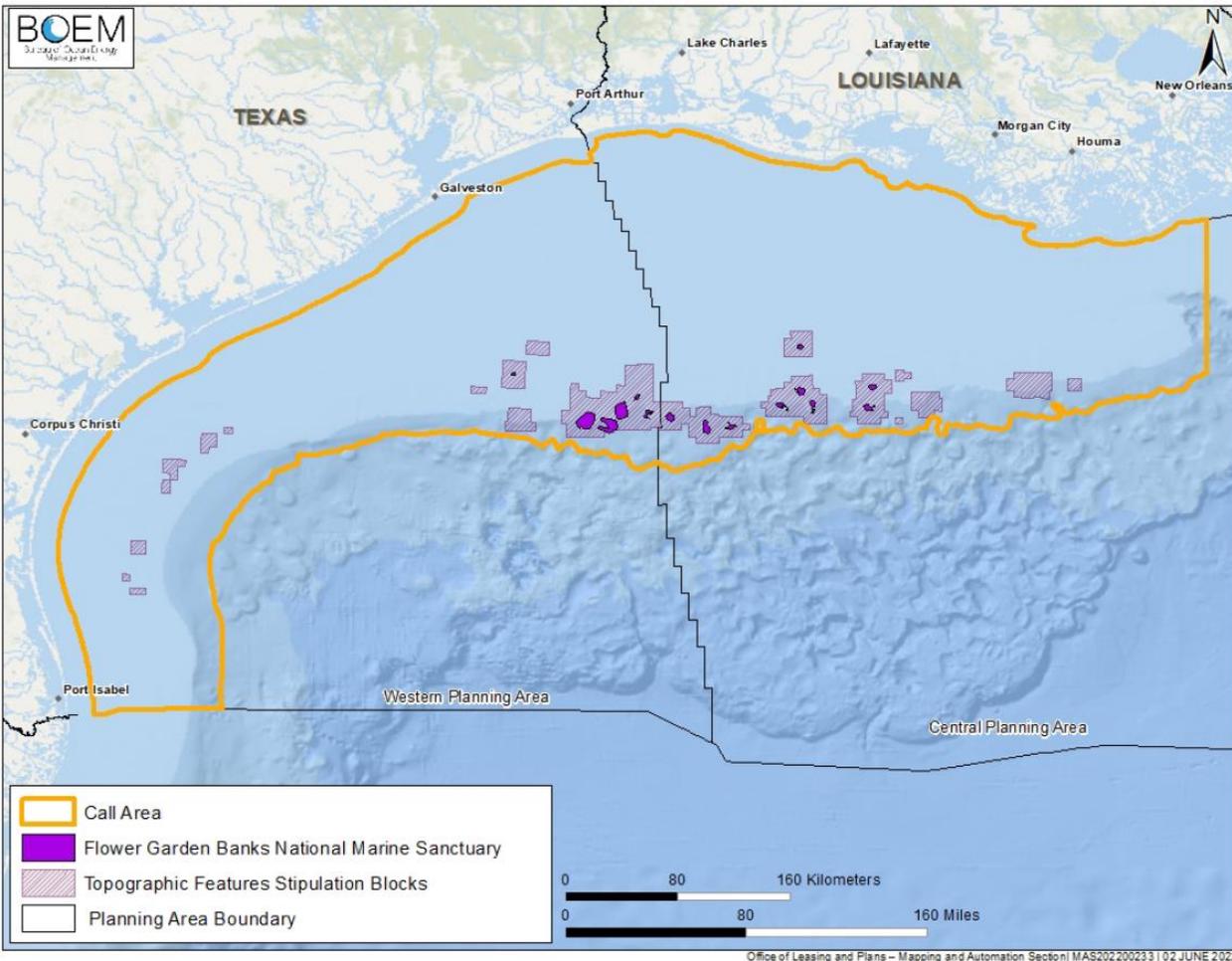
Red circles show site assessment and site characterization activities.



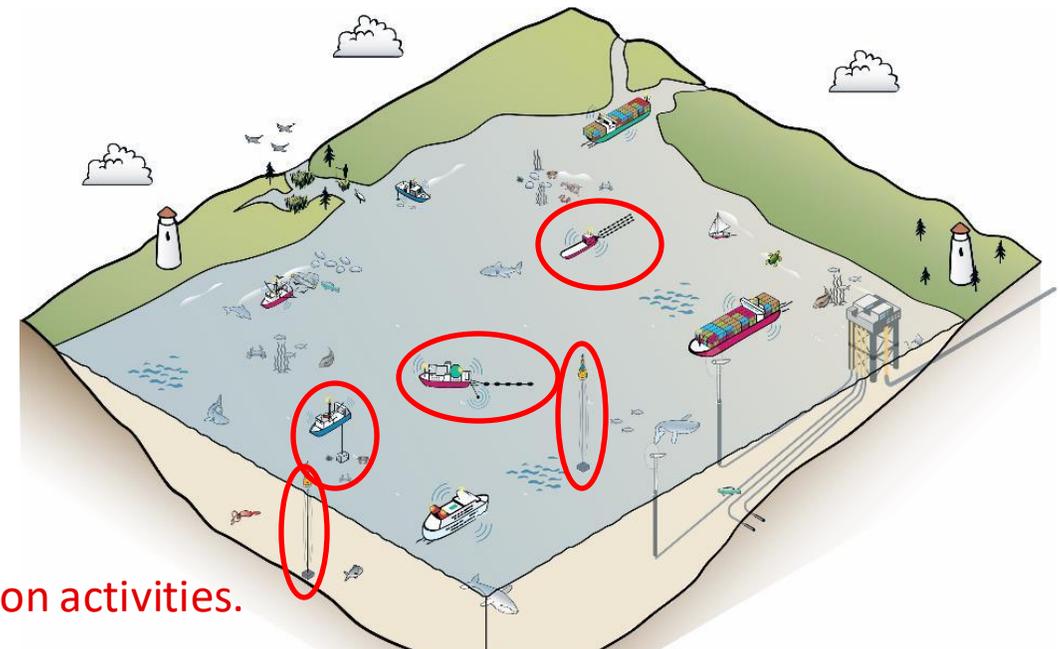
Office of Leasing and Plans – Mapping and Automation Section | MAS202200174 | 17 FEB 2022



Alternative C: OCS Wind Energy Lease Issuance in the GOM Call Area Excluding the Topographic Features Stipulation Blocks



- Alternative C would allow for lease issuance within the GOM Call Area, with the following exceptions:
 - whole and partial blocks located within the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary; and
 - whole or partial Topographic Features Stipulation Blocks.



Alternative C

Red circles show site assessment and site characterization activities.



Impact-Producing Factors (IPFs)

IPFs Associated with the Proposed Action

- Air Emissions and Pollution
- Discharges and Waste
- Bottom Disturbance
- Noise
- Coastal Land Use/Modification
- Lighting and Visual Impacts
- Offshore Habitat Modification/Space Use
- Socioeconomic Changes and Drivers
- Unintended Releases into the Environment
- Response Activities
- Strikes and Collisions

Classification Scheme for Potential Impacts

Negligible

Minor

Moderate

Major



Resources Analyzed in this EA

- **Physical Resources**

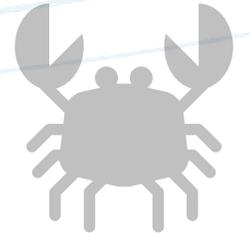
- Air Quality
- Water Quality

- **Biological Resources**

- Coastal Communities and Habitats
- Benthic Communities and Habitats
- Pelagic Communities and Habitats
- Fish and Invertebrates
- Birds
- Bats
- Marine Mammals
- Sea Turtles

- **Social Resources**

- Land Use and Coastal Infrastructure
- Commercial Fisheries
- Recreational Fishing
- Recreation
- Environmental Justice
- Demographics and Employment
- Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources



- Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources



Resources Eliminated from Further Consideration

These resources are anticipated to have **Negligible** or less impacts:

- Water Quality
- Pelagic Communities and Habitats
- Birds
- Bats
- Land Use and Coastal Infrastructure
- Commercial Fisheries
- Recreational Fishing
- Recreation
- Environmental Justice
- Demographics and Employment

- **Reason Eliminated**

- Impacts from all site assessment and site characterization activities were determined to have no or negligible impacts on the resource because of the small size and scope of the Proposed Action in comparison to the cumulative impacts in the GOM.
 - True for both a single OCS wind energy lease and for 18 OCS wind energy leases
- Activities within the Proposed Action of this EA do not include the installation of meteorological (met) towers, as this technology is outdated.



Resources Impacted by Proposed Action

These resources are anticipated to have **Minor** or greater impacts:

- Air Quality
- Coastal Communities and Habitats
- Benthic Communities and Habitats
- Fish and Invertebrates
- Marine Mammals
- Sea Turtles
- Cultural, Historical, and Archaeological Resources
- **IPFs Impacting Resources**
 - Air Emissions and Pollution
 - Bottom Disturbance
 - Noise
 - Strikes and Collisions
 - Unintentional Releases to the Environment

The application of protective measures can reduce or eliminate the potential impacts to some resources.



Standard Operating Conditions (SOCs)

- Reduce or eliminate potential risks to, or conflicts with, some resources.
- This EA determines the impacts to resources from the Proposed Action both with and without the application of potential SOCs to help the decisionmaker determine which SOCs to apply to leases and plans.
- If chosen by the decisionmaker, SOCs will be detailed in the Final Sale Notice.
 - Lessees required to comply through lease stipulations and/or as conditions of site assessment plan
 - Ensures the site characterization and site assessment activities are conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible manner
- BOEM is currently developing GOM-specific lease stipulations and SOCs through regulations and ongoing consultations with appropriate resource agencies.
- Consultations will be complete and SOCs developed before the Final Sale Notice is published.

Mitigation Strategies

- Avoidance
- Survey shutdowns
- Visual monitoring



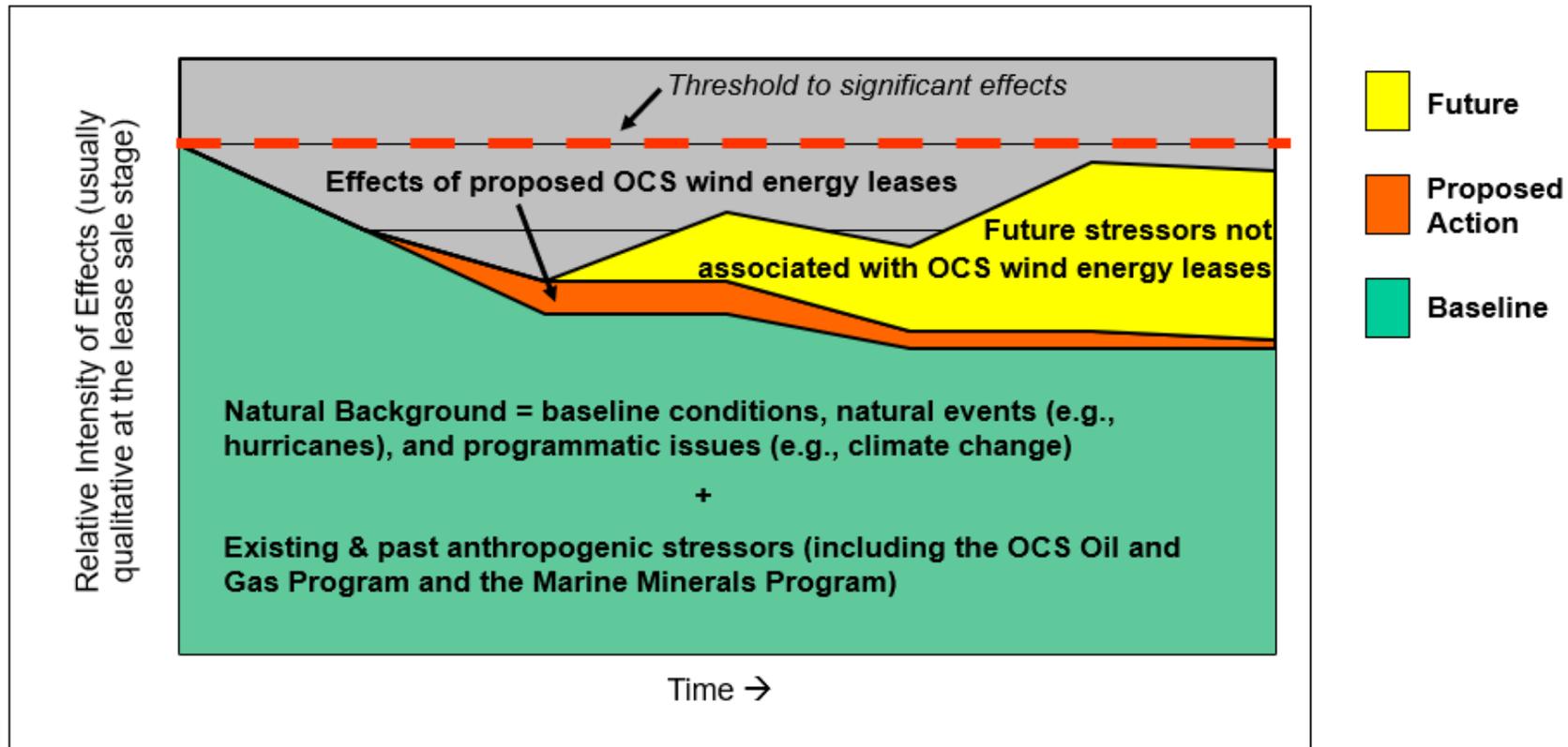
Consultations

- **Endangered Species Act**
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
- **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
- **Marine Mammal Protection Act**
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
- **Coastal Zone Management Act**
 - States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama
- **Government-to-Government Consultations with Federally Recognized Tribes**
 - Eleven Native American Tribes with historic and cultural ties to the Gulf of Mexico
- **National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106)**
 - Texas and Louisiana State Historic Preservation Offices
 - Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
 - Federally recognized Native American Tribes
 - Certified local governments, historical preservation societies, museums, and State-recognized Tribes



Analysis Approach

- Analyzed the impacts of IPFs from site assessment and site characterization activities expected for a single OCS wind energy lease and for 18 OCS wind energy leases
- Compared impact levels of IPFs from site assessment and site characterization activities to the cumulative impacts of those same IPFs in the GOM
 - Cumulative impacts include the proposed action plus past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities in the GOM



The Impacts of the Proposed Action under Alternatives B and C Without the Application of Protective Measures

Magnitude of Potential Impact for Site Assessment and Site Characterization Activities

Range of Incremental Impacts for Site Characterization and Site Assessment Activities for a Single OCS Wind Energy Lease and 18 OCS Wind Energy Leases

Resource	IPFs Impacting Resource	Range of Impacts from All IPFs	Range of Incremental Contribution of Impacts from ALL IPFs Compared to Cumulative Impacts
Air Quality	Air Emissions and Pollution	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor
Coastal Communities and Habitats	Bottom Disturbance	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
Benthic Communities and Habitats	Bottom Disturbance	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor
Fish and Invertebrates	Bottom Disturbance Noise	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor
Marine Mammals	Noise Strikes and Collisions	Moderate	Minor
Sea Turtles	Bottom Disturbance Noise	Negligible to	Negligible
	Strikes and Collisions Unintentional Releases to the Environment	Minor	
Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources	Bottom Disturbance	Minor to	Minor to
		Major	Major

The Impacts of the Proposed Action under Alternatives B and C With the Application of Protective Measures

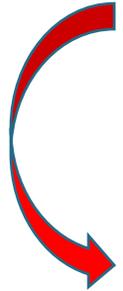
Magnitude of Potential Impact for Site Assessment and Site Characterization Activities

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Resource	IPFs Impacting Resource	Range of Impacts from All IPFs	Range of Incremental Contribution of Impacts from ALL IPFs Compared to Cumulative Impacts
Air Quality	Air Emissions and Pollution	Negligible to Minor	Negligible to Minor
Coastal Communities and Habitats	Bottom Disturbance	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
Benthic Communities and Habitats	Bottom Disturbance	Negligible	Negligible
Fish and Invertebrates	Bottom Disturbance Noise	Negligible	Negligible
Marine Mammals	Noise Strikes and Collisions	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
Sea Turtles	Bottom Disturbance Noise Strikes and Collisions Unintentional Releases to the Environment	Negligible	Negligible
Cultural, Historic, and Archaeological Resources	Bottom Disturbance	Negligible	Negligible

Schedule

We are here in the process (30-Day Comment Period)



Milestone	Dates
Published Draft EA	July 20, 2022
30-Day Comment Period	July 20 – August 19, 2022
Publish Final EA	Early 2023
Publish Final Sale Notice	
Minimum 30-Day Waiting Period	
Sale Date	Early 2023



Providing Public Comments

Public Comment Period Ends August 19, 2022

Helpful Types of Comments:

- Accuracy of information
- Adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used in the environmental analysis
- New information relevant to the analysis or that would change the conclusions
- Where clarification is needed

How to Submit Comments:

- Via www.regulations.gov under Docket ID BOEM-2021-0092
- Through oral testimony at virtual public meetings

For More Information:

- <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/gulf-mexico-activities>



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