



Wilmington East Wind Energy Area (WEA) History and Process Overview

Office of Renewable Energy Programs

Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment Public Meetings

December 14 and 15, 2021

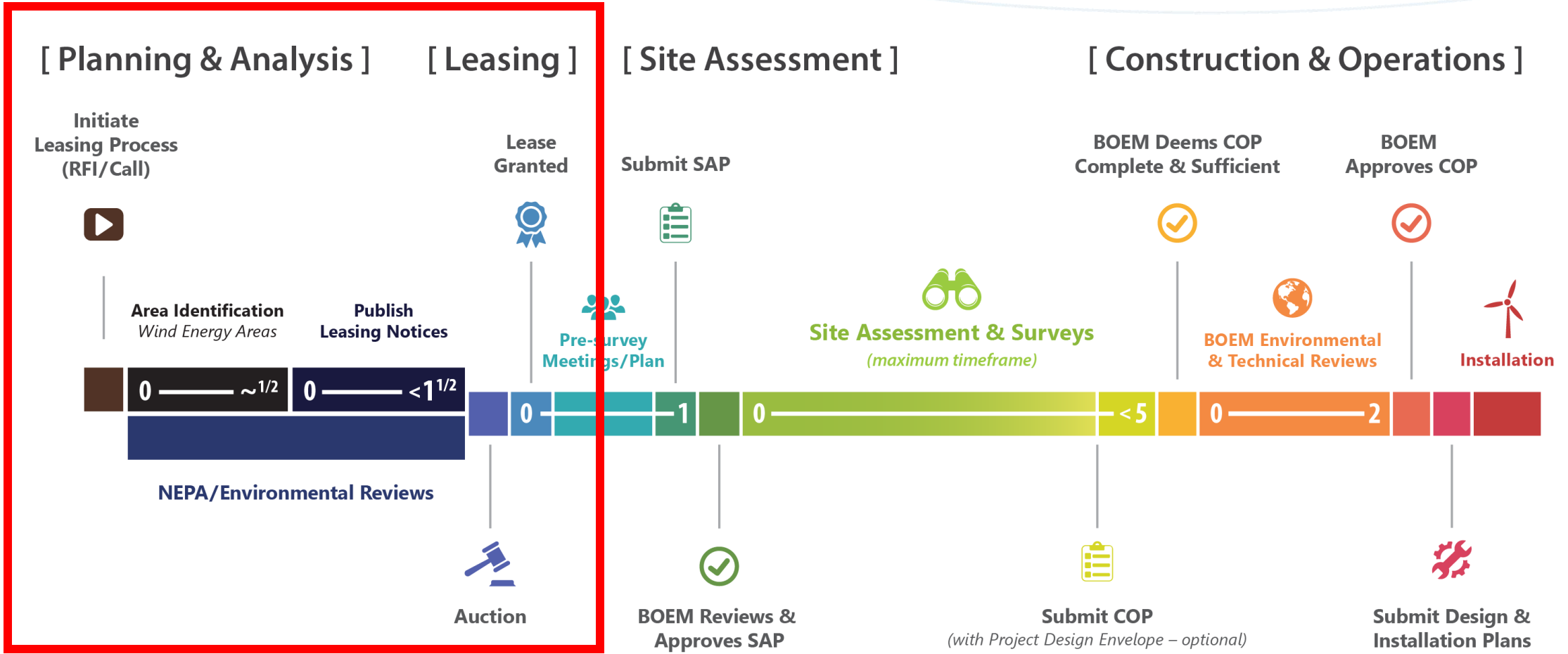


Overview

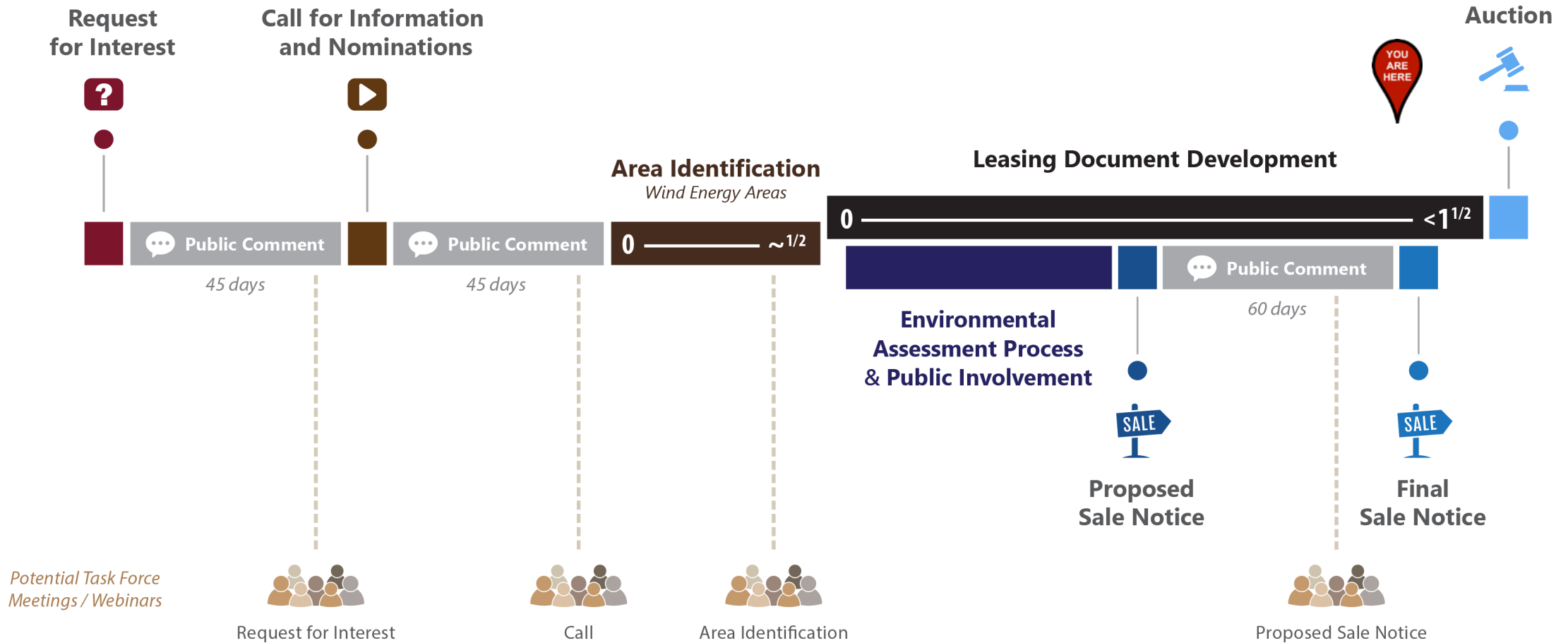
- **Background on Leasing Process**
- **Wind Energy Area (WEA)**
- **Proposed Lease Area**
- **Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA)**



Renewable Energy Process: From RFI/Call to Operation

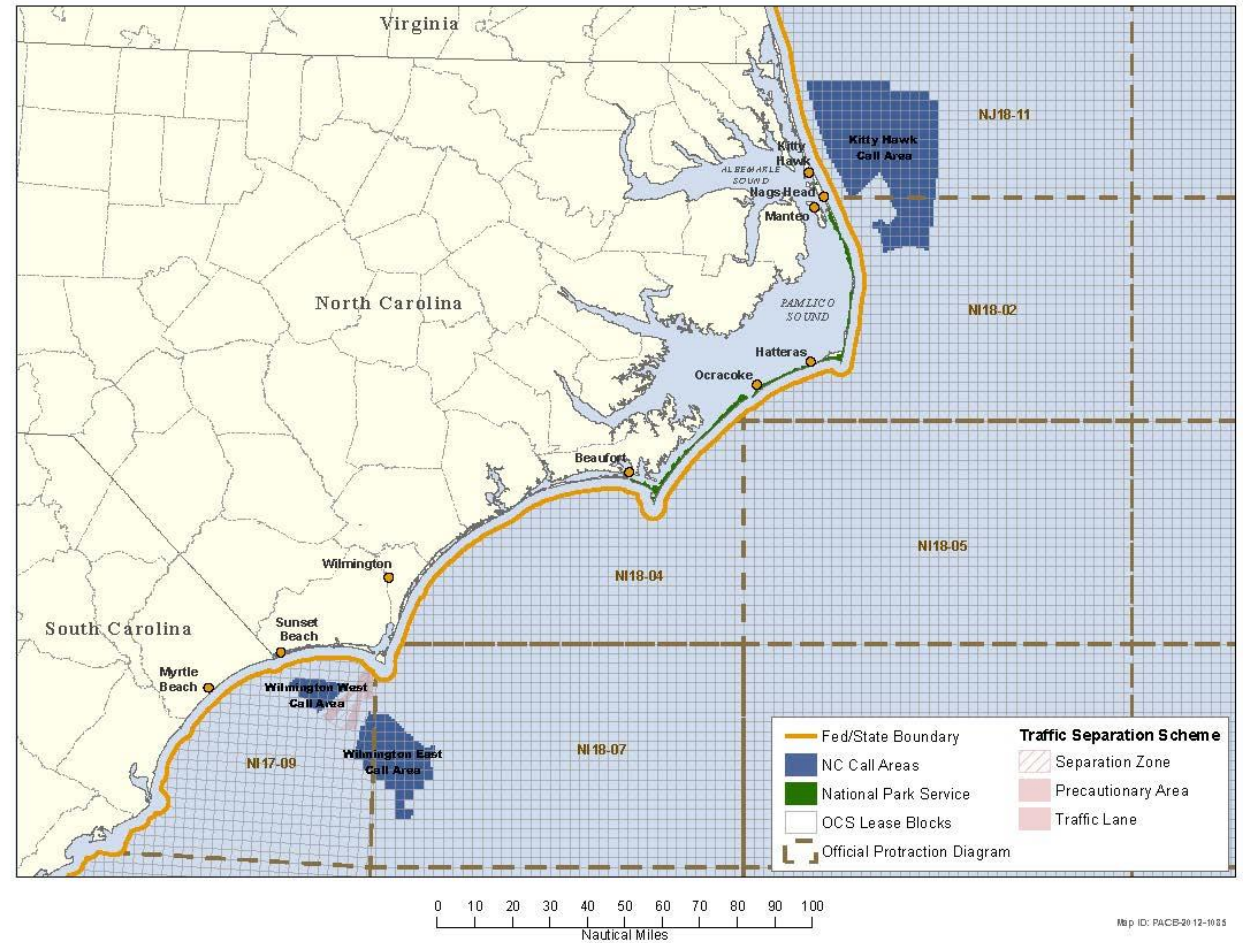


Request for Interest to Lease Sale



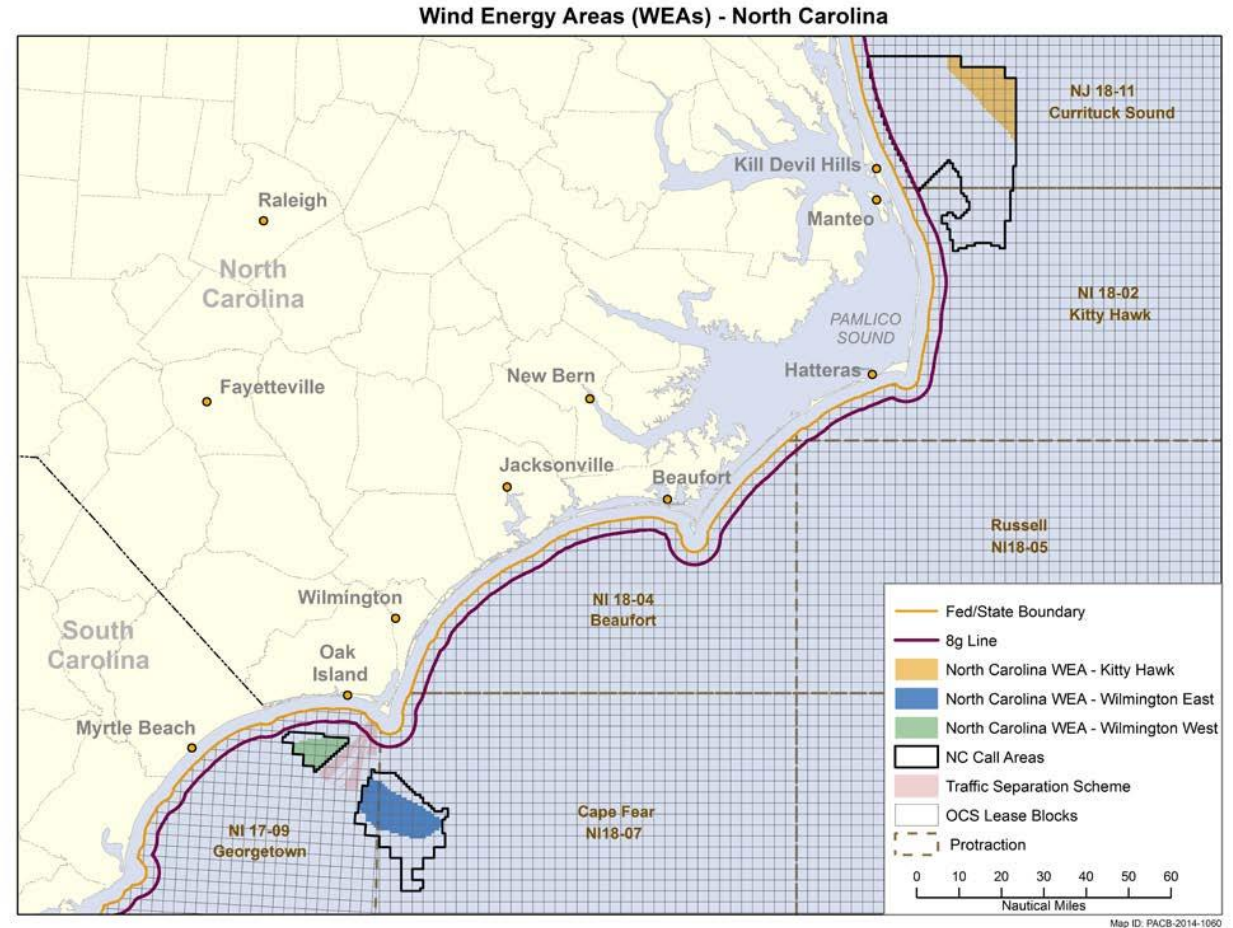
Call for Information and Nominations

- Published Dec. 13, 2012
- Areas for special consideration and analysis
- Requesting activities and conditions in the Call Area
- Requesting areas to be considered for leasing (nominations from wind industry)



Wind Energy Areas

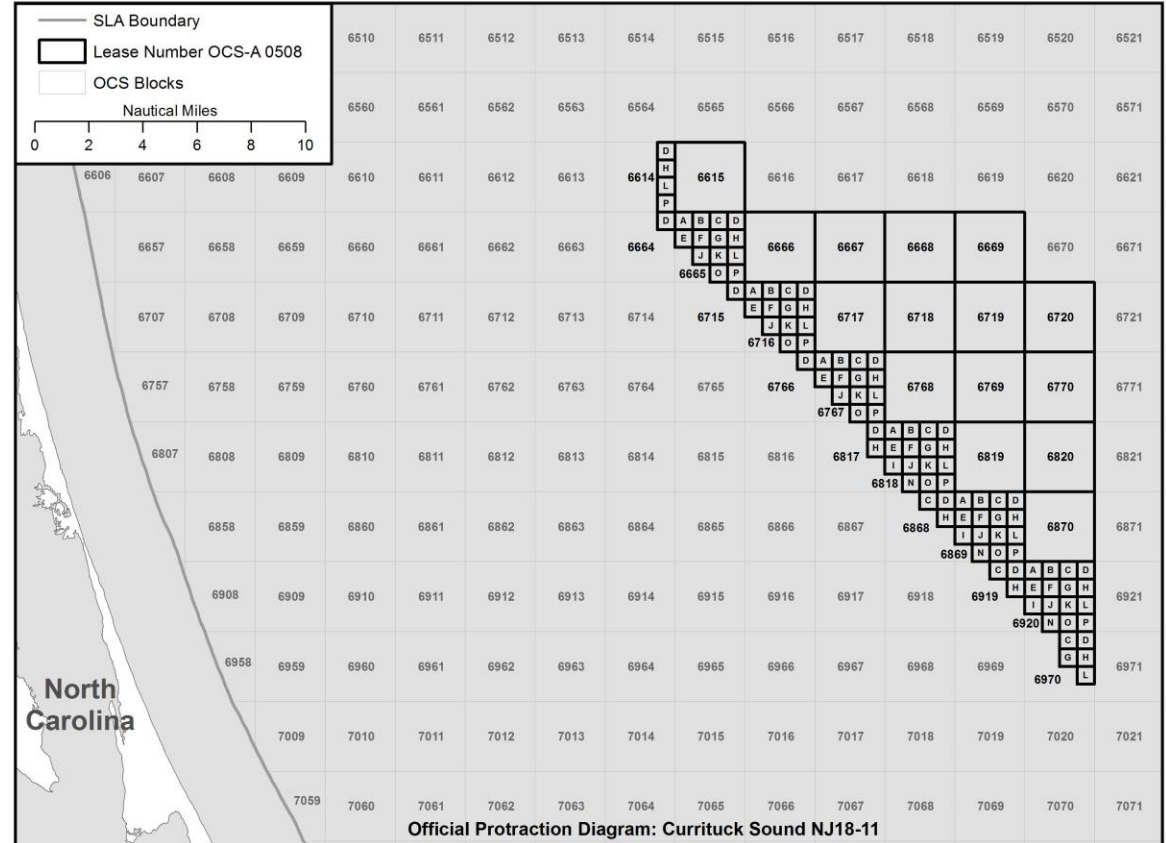
- Three WEAs identified Aug. 11, 2014
- Portion of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) identified by BOEM for NEPA analysis (Environmental Assessment)
- The basis for a Lease Area
- May be further deconflicted and divided into lease areas



Lease Areas

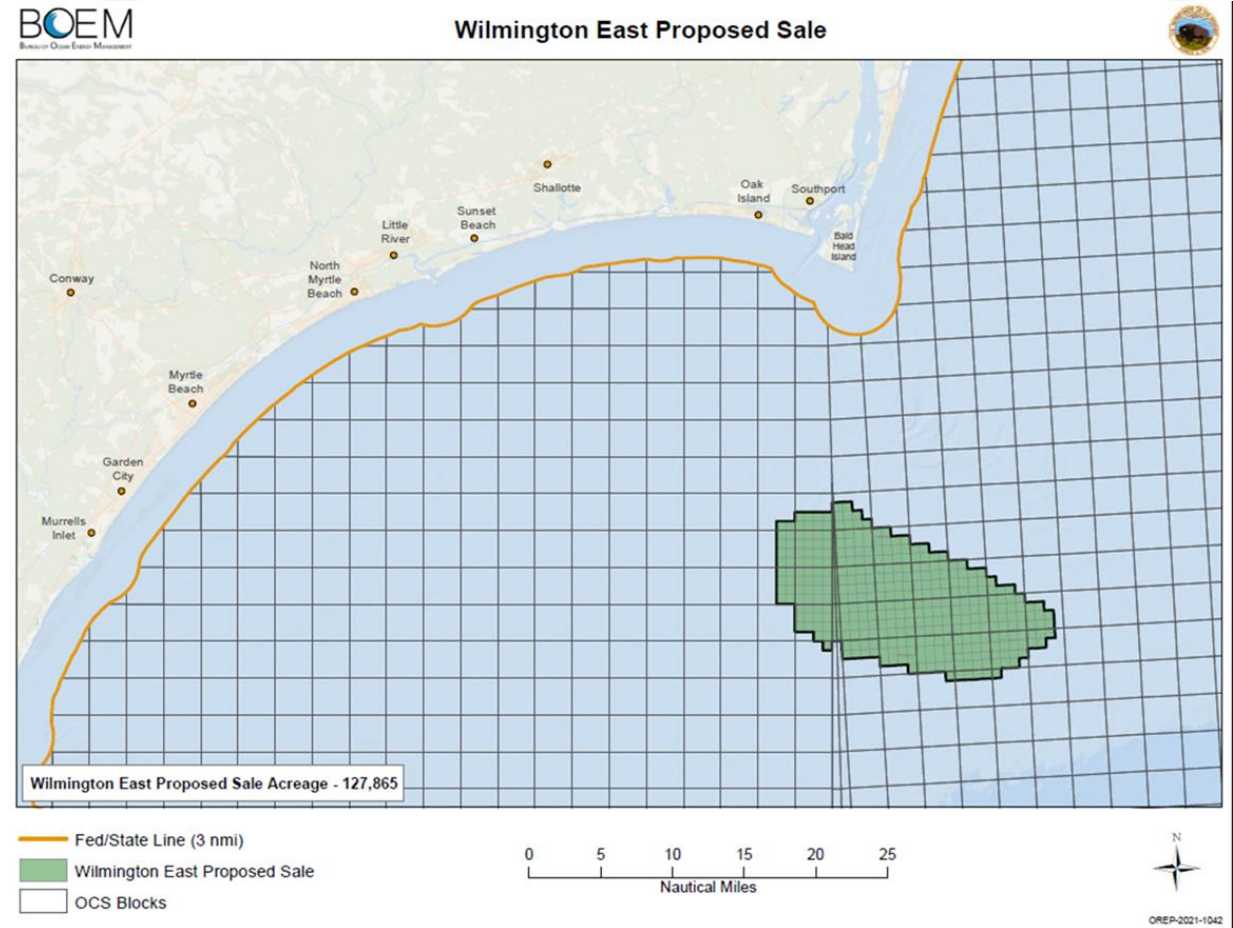
- **Kitty Hawk leased 2017**
- Wilmington East proposed for leasing Nov. 1, 2021
- Wilmington West remains a WEA

Lease Number OCS-A 0508



Lease Areas

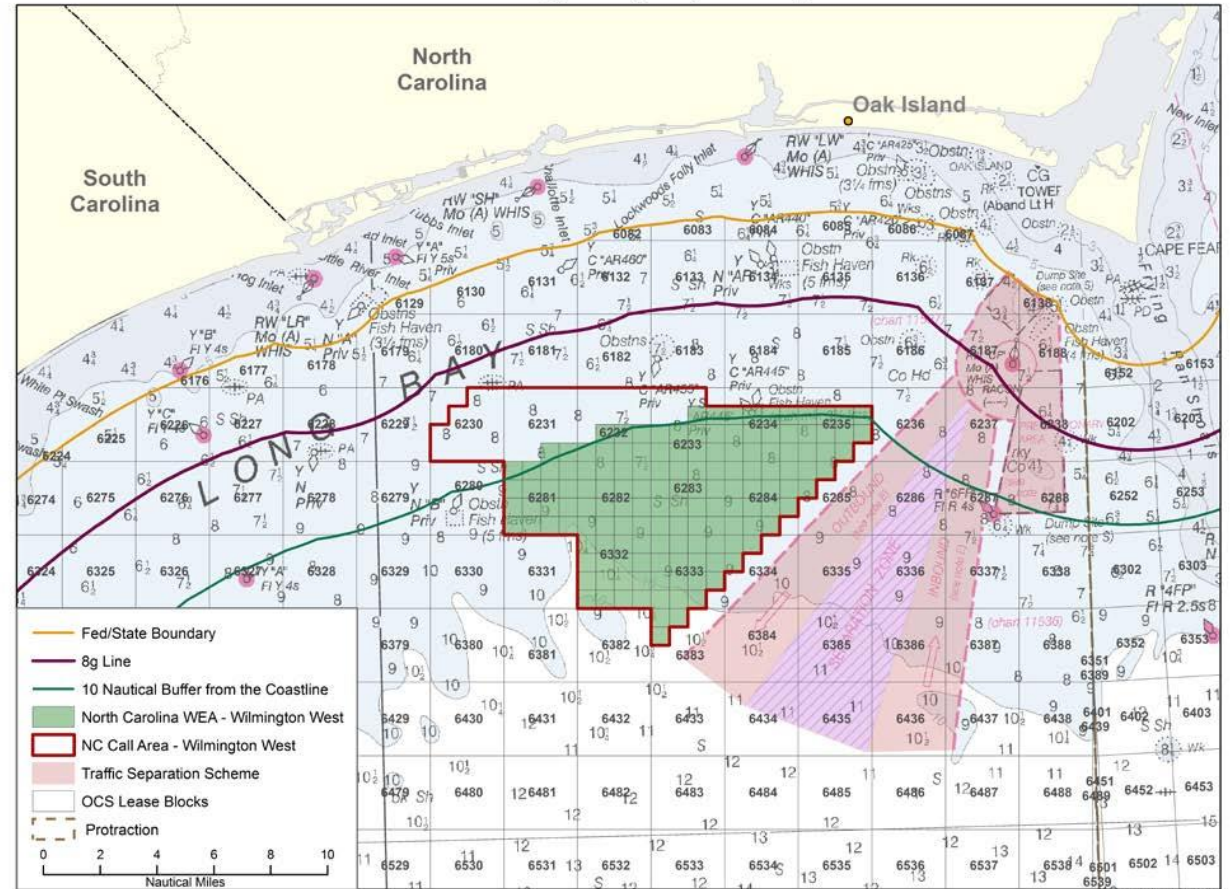
- Kitty Hawk leased 2017
- **Wilmington East proposed for leasing Nov. 1, 2021**
 - Comment period closes Jan. 3, 2022
 - www.regulations.gov docket ID BOEM-2021-0078
- Wilmington West remains a WEA



Lease Areas

- Kitty Hawk leased 2017
- Wilmington East proposed for leasing Nov. 1, 2021
- **Wilmington West remains a WEA**

Wind Energy Area (WEA) - Wilmington West



Stakeholder Outreach in the Carolina Long Bay

- **Task Force Meetings**

- 6 North Carolina
- 5 South Carolina
 - First meeting July 2012
 - Joint meetings began in April 2016

- **Public Meetings**

- Dec 14-15, 2021



BOEM

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The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Office of Renewable Energy Programs

Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment Public Meetings

December 14 and 15, 2021



National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Offshore Wind



Supplemental Environmental Assessment — Site Characterization and Assessment Activities



Environmental Impact Statement — Construction and Operation Plan



NEPA History

- **BOEM published the Commercial Wind Lease Issuance and Site Assessment Activities on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf Offshore North Carolina - Revised Environmental Assessment (EA) in 2015**
 - 2015 EA: <https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/renewable-energy-program/State-Activities/NC/NC-EA-Camera-FONSI.pdf>
 - Considered the environmental impacts of lease issuance, associated site characterization surveys and approving site assessment plans (e.g., construction and operation of meteorological towers and/or buoys) within the Kitty Hawk, Wilmington East and West WEAs
 - BOEM's preferred alternative included the leasing of all three WEAs, but BOEM only moved forward with the Kitty Hawk WEA

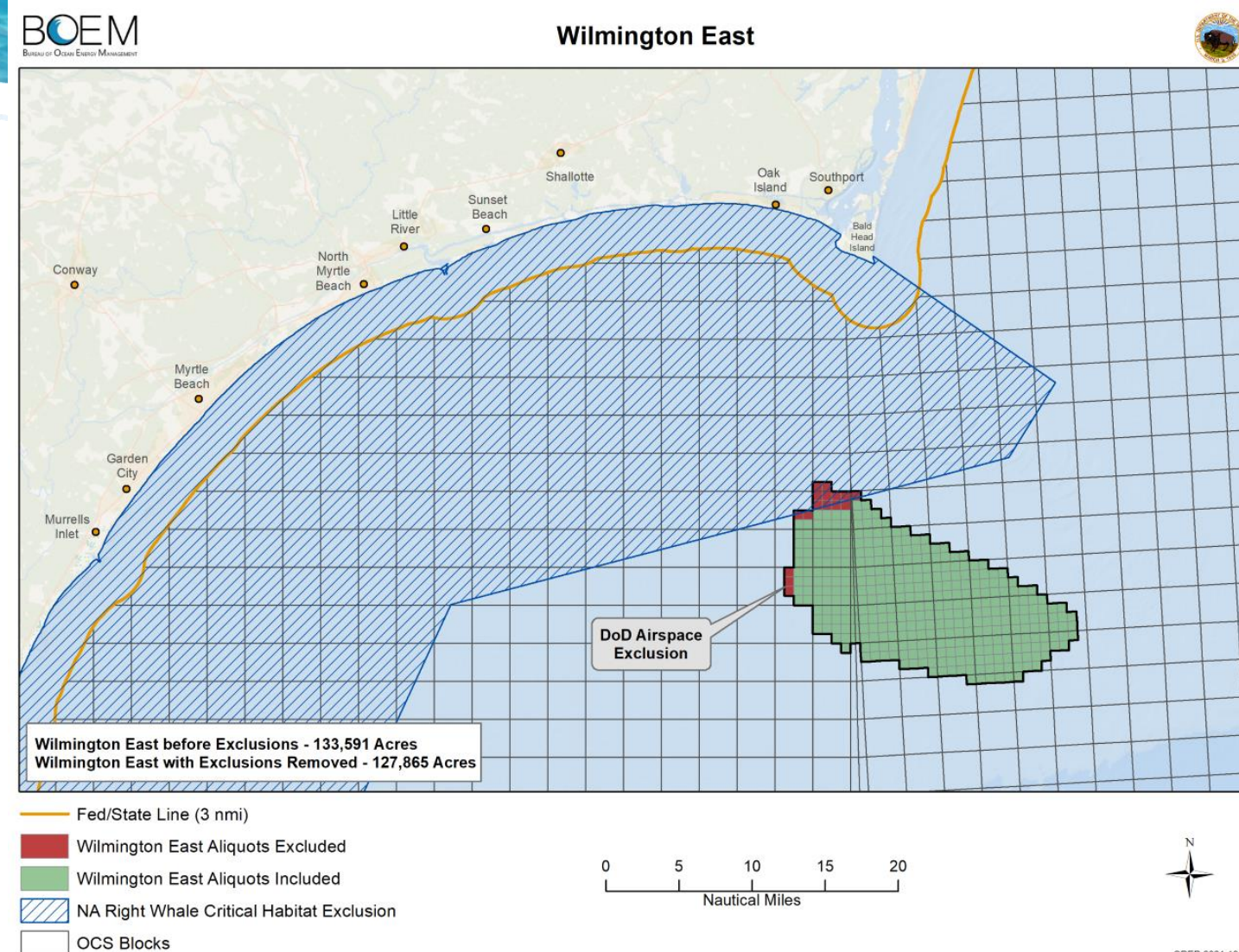


Announcement of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment

- **On August 13, 2021, BOEM issued a Note to Stakeholders on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Carolina Long Bay**
 - <https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/press-releases/boem-supplement-environmental-review-wind-leasing-options-offshore>
 - The announcement initiated a 30-day public comment period that ended on September 12, 2021 (Docket Number BOEM-2021-0055)
 - BOEM published the draft SEA on December 8, 2021
 - The draft SEA considers new information relevant to environmental considerations that were not available when BOEM originally published the 2015 EA

Wilmington East WEA (focus of this SEA)

- Area for leasing totals approximately 127,865 acres and includes the majority of the Wilmington East WEA
- Lease blocks overlapping the North Atlantic right whale critical habitat and areas used for training identified by the Department of Defense were removed from leasing consideration
- About 15 nm from Bald Head Island and extends approximately 18 nm in the southeast direction



Overview of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment

- **Background**
- **Purpose and Need for Action**
- **Proposed Action and Alternatives**
- **Evaluation of New Information and Changed Circumstances**
- **Consultation and Coordination**



Background

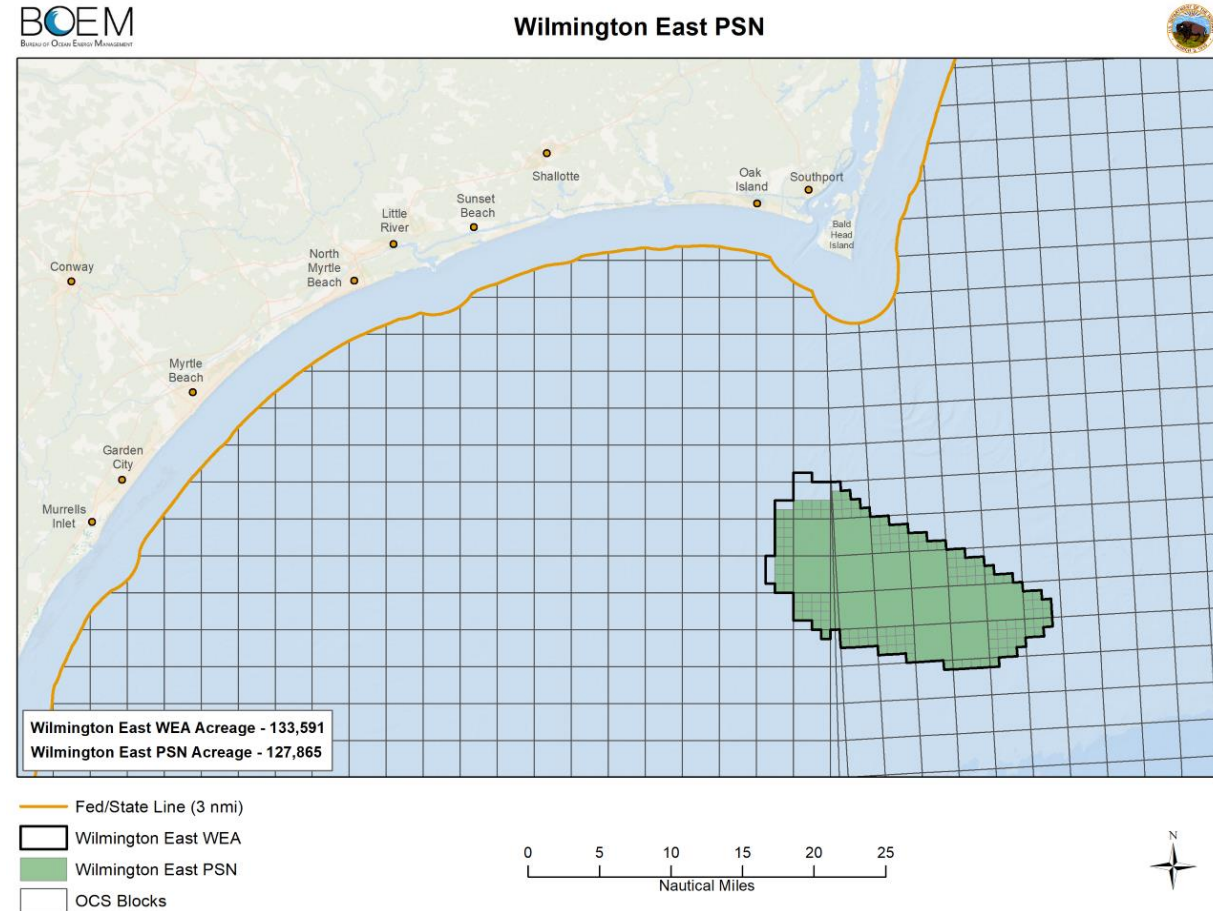
- **Revised Scenarios**

- 2015 EA considered the issuance of one lease per WEA
- The SEA considers the issuance of up to three leases, all within the Wilmington East WEA
- This does not substantially change the associated site assessment and characterization scenarios

Proposed Action

- **Proposed Action:**

- The issuance of up to three commercial wind energy leases within the Wilmington East WEA offshore North Carolina
- Approval of site assessment activities on those leaseholds (through the submission of a site assessment plan (SAP))



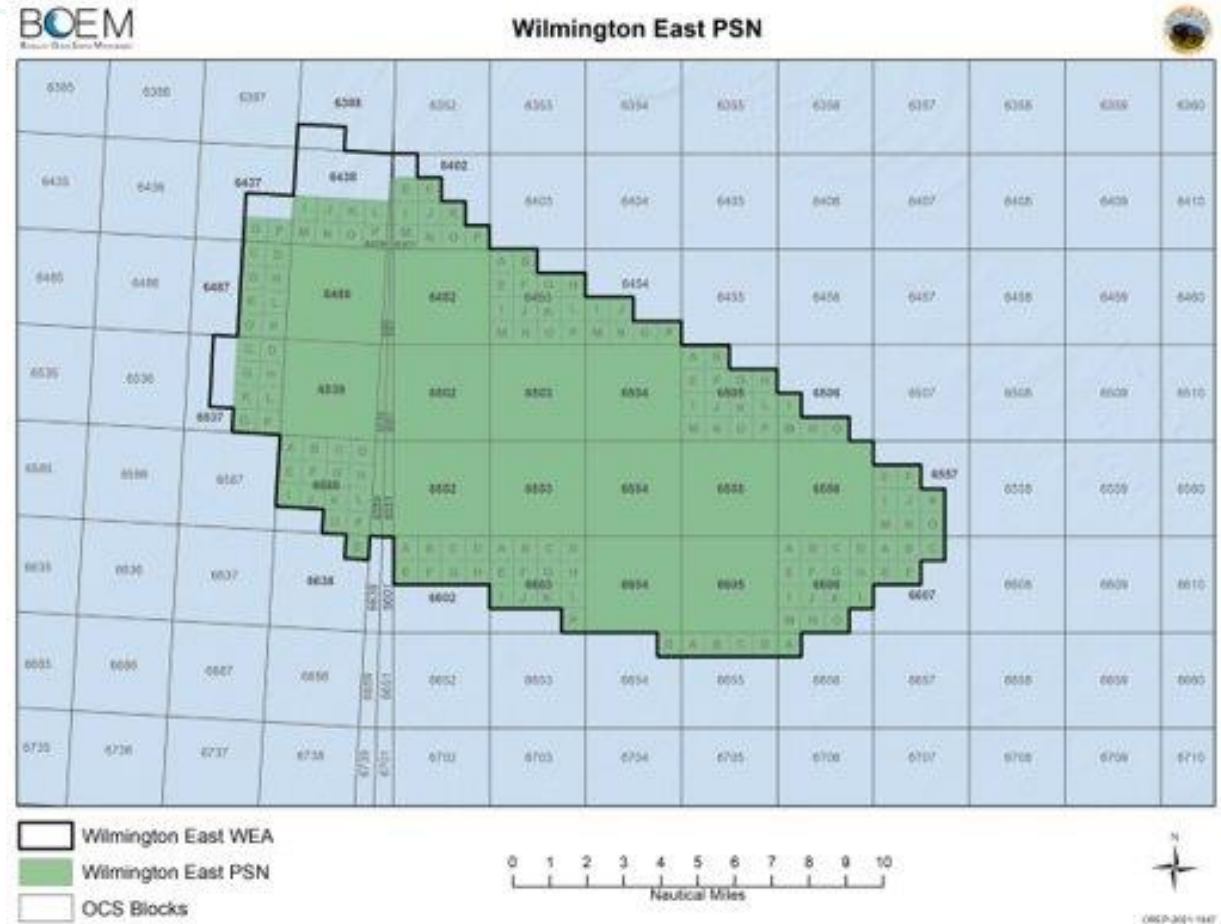
Purpose and Need for Action

Purpose:

To issue up to three leases and approve up to three SAPs

Need:

To adequately assess wind and environmental resources in some or all of the Wilmington East WEA



Activities Analyzed in the Draft SEA

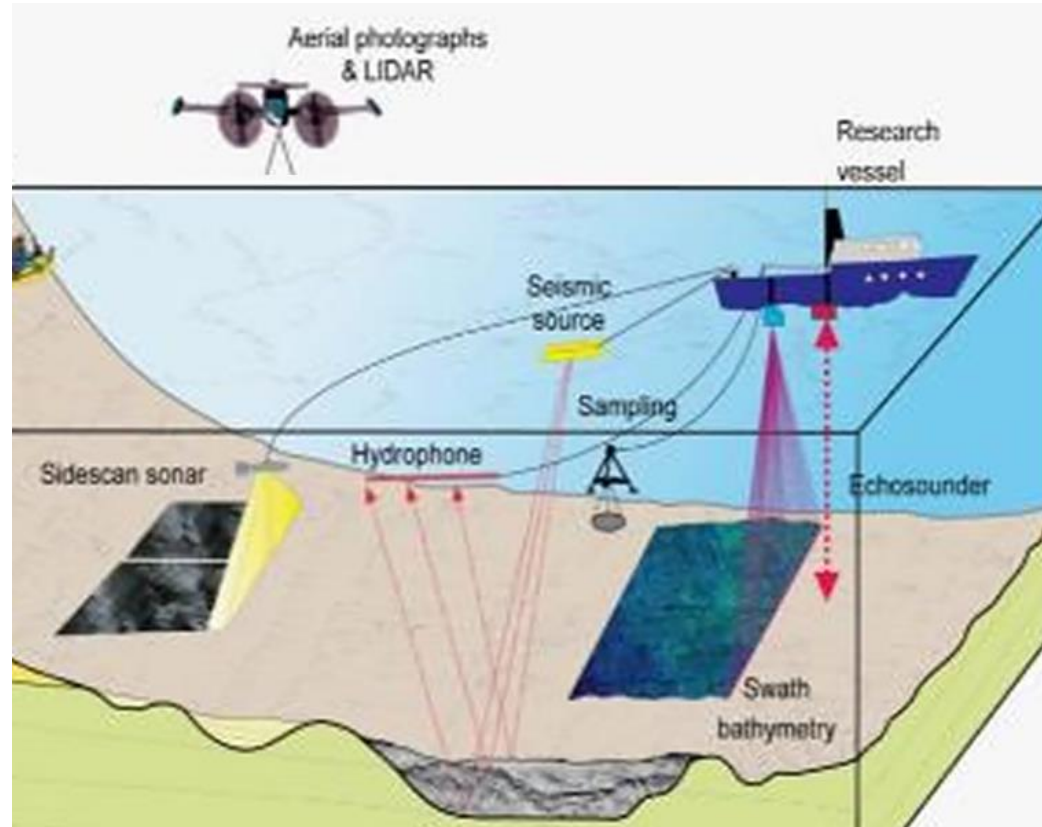
Site Assessment

Temporary placement of meteorological buoys and oceanographic devices

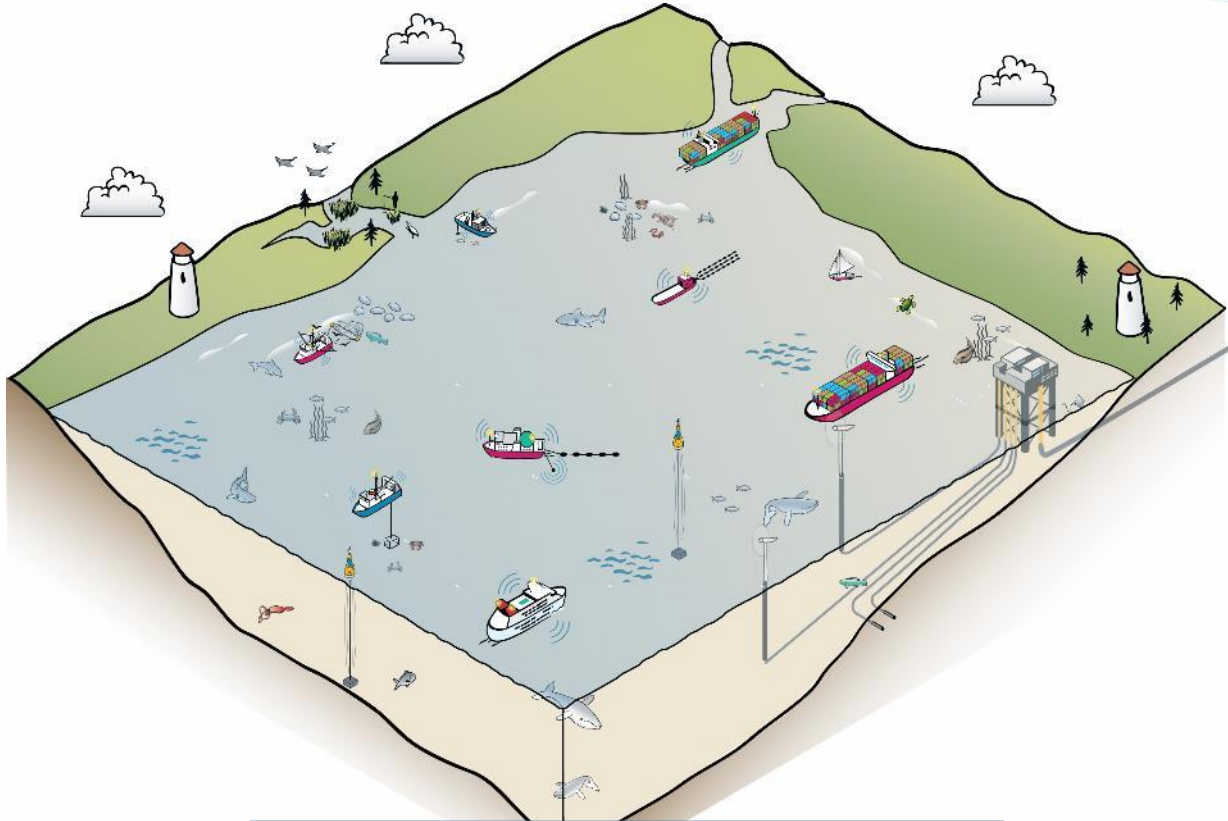


Site Characterization

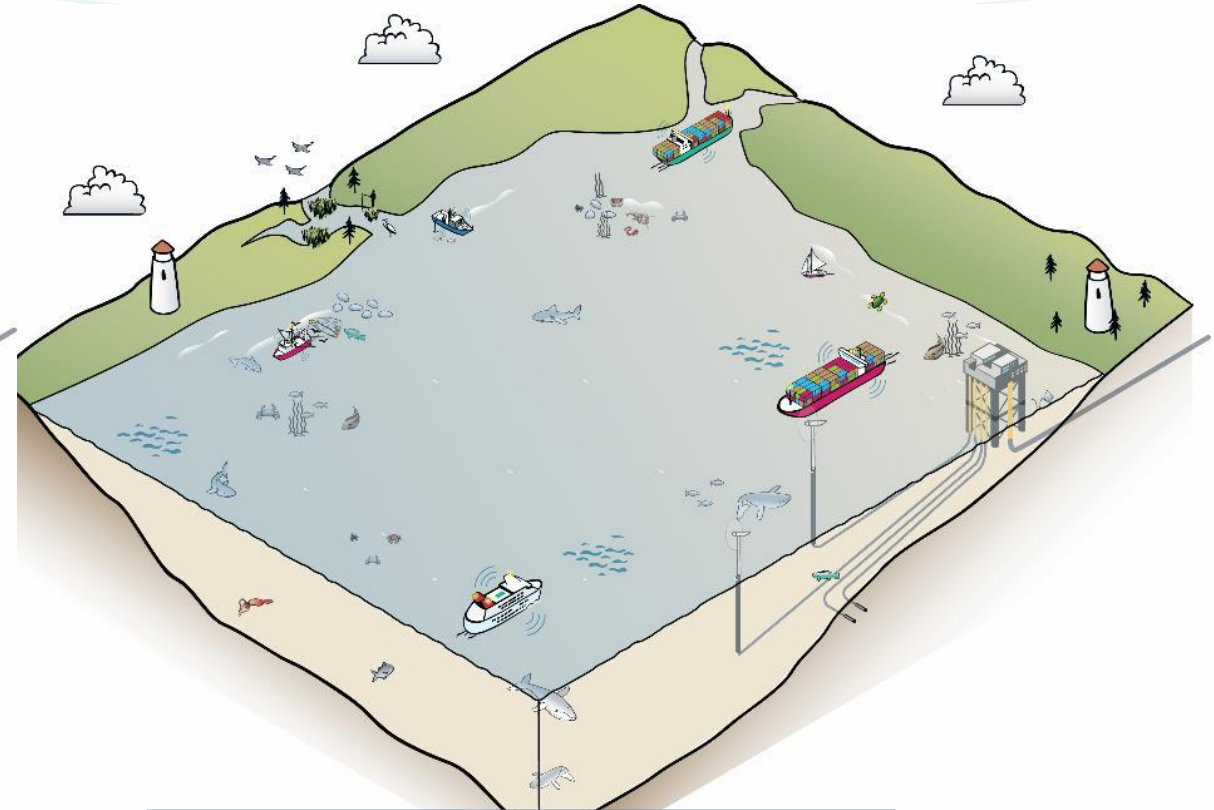
Geophysical surveys, geotechnical surveys, biological surveys, and archeological surveys



Alternatives A and D



Alternative A: Preferred Alternative



Alternative D: No Action

Alternative B – Not Carried Forward

- Under the 2015 EA's Alternative B, the Wilmington West WEA would be excluded from leasing
- Leasing in the Kitty Hawk and Wilmington East WEAs would move forward
- The Proposed Action analyzed in this SEA only considers leasing in the Wilmington East WEA, so Alternative B is not being further analyzed in this SEA

Alternative C

- **Seasonal Restrictions**

- Prohibiting site characterization activities (surveys) during the winter months when NARWs migrate offshore North Carolina
- Specifically, this alternative would limit vessel activity by excluding high-resolution geological and geophysical (G&G) surveys from November 1 through April 30 during the NARW migratory period



Environmental Resources

These resources are analyzed in the SEA:

- Benthic Resources
- Finfish and Essential Fish Habitat
- Commercial and Recreational Fisheries
- Birds and Bats
- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Land Use and Coastal Infrastructure
- Demographics and Employment & Environmental Justice
- Tourism and Recreation
- Navigation and Vessel Traffic
- Cultural, Historical, and Archaeological Resources
- Visual Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species, Marine Mammals, and Sea Turtles



Standard Operating Conditions (SOCs)

- **Reduce or eliminate potential risks to, or conflicts with, some resources**
 - Lessees required to comply through lease stipulations and/or as conditions of site assessment plan
 - Ensures the site characterization and assessment activities are conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible manner

- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Avoidance
 - Survey shutdowns
 - Visual monitoring

2021 Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service

- During the 2015 EA, consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was covered by a biological opinion (BO) issued in 2013 and valid until 2020
- Before the BO expired in 2020, BOEM requested a new consultation in 2018, with publication in June 2021
- The new BO includes project design criteria (PDCs) and best management practices (BMPs) that reduce the potential for adverse effects to discountable levels. These PDCs can be found in Appendix A of the SEA)



Consultations

- **Endangered Species Act**
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
- **National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106)**
- **Coastal Zone Management Act**
 - BOEM needs to send a Federal consistency determination (CD) to the states of North Carolina and South Carolina

Next Steps

Action	Timing
Published Draft SEA	December 8, 2021
30-Day Comment Period	Ends January 7, 2022
Publish Final SEA and Finding of No Significant Impact, if applicable	Spring 2022
Publish Final Sale Notice	
Minimum 30-Day Waiting Period	
Sale Date	Mid-2022

Providing Public Comments

Public comment period ends January 7, 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-2021-0090
- Through oral testimony at virtual public meetings
- In writing to:
"Comments on the NC SEA" and addressed to Program Manager, Office of Renewable Energy, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, 45600 Woodland Road, Sterling, Virginia 20166

<https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/carolina-long-bay>

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