

## GULF OF MAINE DRAFT CALL AREA INFORMATION EXCHANGES JANUARY 17-19, 2023 – MEETING SUMMARY

*DISCLAIMER: This meeting summary was prepared by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), a non-profit entity contracted by BOEM to facilitate these engagement meetings. This summary is not intended to be a meeting transcript. Rather, it focuses on the main points covered during the meeting.*

### Meetings In Brief

Over the course of three days, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) convened three in-person engagement meetings (held in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine) about the Federal commercial leasing process for offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine. BOEM designed the meetings to be an interactive space for participants to provide information and receive feedback, particularly regarding the data and modeling that BOEM uses to identify potential areas for offshore wind development. The meetings started with opening presentations from BOEM and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Center for Coastal and Ocean Science (NOAA-NCCOS). Participants then held smaller-group conversations at four thematic stations focused on fisheries, environment and wildlife, shipping and technology, and the NOAA-NCCOS spatial model. A final plenary session allowed participants to ask questions and give feedback. Staff from BOEM, NOAA-NCCOS, and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) were available at the stations before and after the meetings to answer questions and meet informally with participants.

*Presentations and other meeting materials can be found [here](#).*

### PRESENTATIONS

Zach Jylkka, BOEM Project Coordinator, delivered the opening presentation for BOEM. In his presentation, Mr. Jylkka reviewed key steps in the Gulf of Maine Planning Process, describing how BOEM narrows and deconflicts potential areas for development. The presentation explained how comments on an initial Request for Interest (RFI) informed a draft Call Area released weeks before the meetings. Mr. Jylkka reviewed BOEM's upcoming steps and how stakeholders can continue to influence BOEM's decisions. For further information, please see the slides [here](#).

Dr. James Morris, a marine ecologist with NOAA-NCCOS, presented on his center's partnership with BOEM to help the Federal government make informed decisions around offshore wind siting by using spatial models. Dr. Morris provided details about the spatial modeling process that will be used in the Gulf of Maine to develop draft Wind Energy Areas. For more information, please see the slides [here](#).

### KEY THEMES FROM PLENARY SESSIONS

Below is a summary of key themes and topics discussed during the plenary sessions from all three information exchanges:

#### Outreach and participation in the meetings

- Participants expressed concern about the need for more fishing industry participation in these discussions. Fishing industry stakeholders and participants from other industries encouraged BOEM to find more ways to reach out, advertise, and interact with the fishing industry.
- For instance, participants urged BOEM to contact local fishery organizations in every state and schedule time with those organizations to go over the BOEM process in detail.
- To be sure, participants provided positive feedback about how BOEM structured and conducted the in-person meetings, even as they highlighted the need for more contact with fishermen and visibility in the fishing community around the process.

## Impacts on fisheries and the environment

- Participants from the fishing industry expressed various concerns about how offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine could negatively affect fishing livelihoods, the Gulf of Maine, and coastal communities. These concerns included:
  - Access to important fishing grounds
  - Negative impacts on habitat and fish stocks – and a sense that the impacts aren't fully understood today.
  - A call for BOEM to learn from the proposed research array before advancing commercial leasing. Some participants urged BOEM to slow down the commercial leasing process.
  - Impacts from transmission cables (electromagnetic fields, benthic impacts, specific mention of cod, and studies looking at potential impacts on juvenile lobster and haddock)
  - Potential impacts on whales and reference to recent humpback whale strandings in the mid-Atlantic.
  - Potential leaking oil from turbines

## Siting and the draft Call Area

- Several participants from environmental groups thanked BOEM for the habitat area removals in the draft Call Area, which responded to RFI comments
- Several participants urged BOEM to exclude Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) seasonal restricted areas, including the LMA1 restricted area.
- Fishermen and environmentally concerned participants urged BOEM to work with fishermen in developing draft Wind Energy Areas and to exclude the most important fishing areas based on the most accurate data possible.
  - Several participants mentioned Platts Bank as a critical fishing area
  - Several participants said the lobster data was incomplete, and BOEM should work with states and fishermen to improve that data.
  - Several participants noted how challenging it will be to avoid conflicts since the turbines will be in the water for decades, and the Gulf of Maine is experiencing changes. How can this process anticipate those changes?

## Transmission lines

- Several participants expressed concerns about transmission line impacts and frustration that the leasing process appears to move forward without consideration of where future transmission lines might run. These participants urged BOEM to incorporate the siting of transmission lines as a consideration in the designation of Wind Energy Areas.

## Spatial modeling

- Several participants asked questions about how the NCCOS model may weigh different data layers, and other judgment calls inherent in the model.
- One question focused on the criteria for calling an area “unsuitable” – and whether those criteria are decided in advance.
- Several participants applauded BOEM for working with NOAA-NCCOS in the modeling work to look across multiple data sets systematically.

## Overall views on offshore wind

- Several participants, from environmental advocates to local development groups and ship pilots, encouraged BOEM to continue its commercial leasing process in the Gulf of Maine, citing the urgent need to address climate change with more renewable energy and the economic opportunities it will bring.
- Other participants asked about the full environmental and climate impact of offshore wind once construction and maintenance activities are factored in, as well as any potential longer vessel trips that might occur to avoid eventual arrays.
- Participants asked how many new jobs might go to residents.

## KEY THEMES FROM FEEDBACK FORMS

Below is a summary of key themes and topics from written feedback forms from these meetings:

### Areas for Removal and Data to Include for Consideration

- Participants noted the need to understand current and historical data to predict future fishery usage.
- There were concerns about using AIS and VMS data, as not all vessels currently use them, and certain states like Maine will not be rolling out more of those systems until later in 2023. Thus, participants asked for this data to be incorporated as soon as possible into any modeling; otherwise, the data would be incomplete.
- There were requests to include species distribution models for commercially significant species such as haddock and squid.
- For NROC data modelers, participants asked for data to be correct time scaled; otherwise, it could be flawed.
- Platts Bank was frequently cited as an area to be removed from the Draft Call Area.
- For NCCOS modeling, participants requested transparency about assigning suitability scores and deciding how to weigh layers.
- Requests were made to incorporate the following data in spatial modeling to inform the eventual WEA(s):
  - NH/ME Inshore trawl survey areas
  - More data from the Massachusetts fishing industry

### Transmission Lines

- There is necessary to understand where transmission cables will be placed on and offshore. There were several specific asks to see a map of existing submarine transmission lines and potential land-based interconnection points.

### Environmental Data

- A high level of concern for the seabird population and multiple requests for a 24-mile buffer for the Maine islands due to seabird colonies needing a foraging area around each island. In addition, participants requested that the existing 20-mile buffer off the coast of Maine include a pad around islands.
- Participants requested the incorporation of more seabird data and the removal of areas around Georges Bank where there are areas of importance for marine birds that require protection.
- There were several requests to include ALWTRP seasonal restricted areas and closed fishing areas on maps and data layers for the Draft Call Area.