ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: Atlantic

Planning Area(s): North, Mid-Atlantic

Title: Atlantic Offshore Wind Energy Development: Public Attitudes, Values, and Implications for Recreation and Tourism

BOEM Cost: $200,000 **Period of Performance:** FY 2012-2015

Conducting Organization(s): University of Delaware

BOEM Contact: Brian Krevor

Description:
Background: During public outreach meetings and conferences, including the *BOEMRE Atlantic Wind Energy Workshop 2011*, feedback from stakeholders (including scientists, industry experts, Tribal representatives and others) expressed concern for the potential effects of offshore wind energy development on the region's tourism and recreation sectors (beach activities, fishing, wildlife watching, boating, etc.). A few studies have been conducted on this topic but they have generally been limited to the local/sub-regional level (for example, in North Carolina, Delaware, New Jersey, and Massachusetts). The need for regional level scientific information was emphasized at the workshop. This study will build upon the existing studies and allow the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the State of Delaware, and numerous stakeholders, to consider and better understand the impacts of offshore wind energy development at the regional level. Specifically, regional-level analysis of impacts on tourism and recreation will help BOEM in the preparation of environmental compliance documents related to offshore wind energy development and leasing. Additionally, this research could contribute to Atlantic marine spatial planning efforts, provide additional information for BOEM Renewable Energy State Task Forces, and assist coastal planners along the Atlantic seaboard.

There have been several studies in the U.S. on the attitudes and perceptions of coastal tourists towards offshore wind development. Two recent studies conducted by the University of Delaware researchers include *"The Effect of Wind Power Installations on Coastal Tourism"* (Lilley et al., 2010) and *"Delaware Opinion on Offshore Wind Power"* (Firestone et al., 2008). Lilley et al., 2010 surveyed actual beachgoers in Delaware regarding their opinions of offshore wind power development and examined how visible wind turbines might affect beach-going habits. Other studies examining tourism-related impacts have been conducted in New Jersey (Schulman, S. and J. Rivera. 2009. *"Survey of Residents & Visitors in Four Communities Along the Southern New Jersey Shore"*) and North Carolina (Landry, C.E., T. Allen, T. Cherry, and J.C. Whitehead. 2010. "*Wind Turbines and Coastal Recreation Demand.*"), though all of these studies have focused on

the local or state level. This study will help to provide a broader regional impact analysis and produce results that can be used to expand and verify previous efforts.

Objectives:

1. Identify the preferences (such as the amenities and characteristics of certain coastal areas/beaches) that tourists – both in-state and out – consider to be of value when making their recreational choices. Determine how these preferences might differ based on geographic location or between in-state and out-of-state tourists.

2. An understanding of the positive and negative impacts of offshore wind development on the valued amenities and characteristics of coastal areas as perceived by tourists.

3. Understand how offshore wind development might impact coastal tourism in the region with regard to destination, visitation habits, and activity choice. Would people be more likely to avoid recreational activities or areas close to wind turbines, or more likely to visit such areas, and why? Would tourists be more likely to travel to a recreational area specifically to see a wind facility?

4. Where possible, identify the economic impact to tourism from offshore wind energy development and identify whether such impacts differ based on geographic location. For example, would areas with offshore wind facilities, particularly those close to shore or visible from shore, be expected to experience an increase or decrease in tourism-related expenditures? Would tourists be willing to pay a premium to access a coastal area (such as a park or wildlife refuge) where turbines were visible from shore, or would tourists consider the presence of turbines a disamenity and expect compensation or otherwise alter their destination choice? Finally, do the preferences of tourists in regards to amenities and characteristics have a correlation to their responses to potential offshore wind development?

Importance to BOEM: While BOEM has seen significant interest in offshore wind energy development in recent years, the absence of baseline data for specific areas along the Atlantic coast and the absence of a broader regional study on tourism and wind power has made it difficult to identify and analyze the potential impacts of offshore wind development on coastal tourism and recreation. This lack of information makes planning and decision making challenging for BOEM and other stakeholders including state governments.

Current Status: The cooperative agreement was awarded on September 10, 2012. A kick-off meeting was held on October 23, 2012. A draft version of the survey was reviewed in March, 2013. Significant progress has been made on the submission of the survey to OMB for compliance with the paperwork reduction act. The contractor

submitted their response to commenters and made revisions to the survey. The survey should be launched in late Fall 2014. A no cost extension has been requested with the study being completed on September 30, 2015.

Final Report Due: September 30, 2015

Publications: None.

Affiliated Web Sites: None.

Revised Date: October 31, 2014

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System
All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:
http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp