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BOEMRE Completes Study of Undersea Power Cables

Findings Will Assist in Evaluating and Reducing Potential Ecological Effects of Electromagnetic Fields

CAMARILLO, Calif. – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today announced the completion of a two-year study into potential ecological effects of electromagnetic fields (EMF) emitted by sub-sea power transmission cables. The study's key findings relate to engineering solutions that reduce EMF exposure, identification of data gaps in existing scientific literature, and suggested research priorities to direct future work in studying electromagnetic fields.

The findings will assist the bureau in evaluating the effectiveness of strategies designed to avoid or reduce potential effects on marine wildlife from cables associated with future offshore renewable energy projects on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

"As the nation moves toward commercial development of offshore renewable energy resources, we must continue our effort to expand our knowledge and understanding of the potential effects on the marine environment of emerging technologies and power transmission," said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich.

Renewable energy projects on the OCS are expected to use sub-sea power cables to transmit electricity generated offshore into an onshore power grid. These undersea power transmission cables generate EMFs that may be detected by marine organisms. This study synthesizes information regarding the potential ecological effects of EMF exposure on marine organisms. The results of this study will assist in the evaluation of the cables and configurations most well-suited for energy transmission, environmental protection, and economic viability.

Although the study suggests more work is needed to fully understand the nature and magnitude of any potential effects on marine species from sub-sea power cables, the findings provide useful technical assistance that will be useful in analyzing proposed renewable energy projects on the OCS.

Funded by BOEMRE and conducted by Normandeau Associates, Inc., the EMF study final report, Effects of EMFs From Undersea Power Cables on Elasmobranchs and Other Marine Species, is available at: <http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/PI/PDFImages/ESPIS/4/5115.pdf>.

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