

Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study

Field	Study Information
Title	Maritime Heritage of the U.S. Pacific Islands (PC-22-07b)
Administered by	Pacific OCS Regional Office
BOEM Contact(s)	Dave Ball (david.ball@boem.gov)
Procurement Type(s)	Cooperative Agreement
Conducting Organization(s)	East Carolina University
Total BOEM Cost	\$1,199,377
Performance Period	FY 2023–2027
Final Report Due	September 30, 2027
Date Revised	January 8, 2025
Problem	No baseline cultural resources/heritage information (including database of underwater cultural heritage) currently exists for the U.S. Pacific Island territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).
Intervention	Compile baseline data of underwater cultural heritage and potential viewshed historic property concerns and identify best practices for consultation with indigenous communities.
Comparison	This effort will be similar to the Maritime Cultural Resources Site Assessment in the Main Hawaiian Islands study, as well as baseline and best practices efforts that were completed for the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf of Mexico outer continental shelf (OCS).
Outcome	Compile baseline information and identify best practices for consultation with indigenous communities in support of National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to support agency decision-making.
Context	This is a baseline effort for the U.S. Pacific Island territories and OCS waters. Information from this study will support BOEM’s Renewable Energy and Marine Minerals Programs.

BOEM Information Need(s): U.S. Pacific Island territories are highly dependent on imported fossil fuels to provide electricity to the islands. American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) have each set aggressive renewable energy goals to lessen this dependence. In support of this transition, the U.S. Congress has been considering an amendment to the OCS Lands Act to authorize offshore wind energy leasing within the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) adjacent to U.S. territories.¹

Additionally, the OCS around these island territories may contain an abundance of critical mineral resources that may be of interest for future industry extraction; BOEM, NOAA, and USGS are coordinating efforts to identify these areas. Given the increased interest to the OCS in the Pacific, BOEM

needs to gather baseline information on archaeological and cultural resources that could be affected by these activities. This information will directly support National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) assessments and consultation.

Background: Baseline desktop cultural resources studies and updates have been completed for the Atlantic OCS (TRC Environmental Corporation 2012), Gulf of Mexico OCS (Pearson et al. 2003), Hawaii (NOAA Maritime Heritage Program 2017; Watson et al. 2017; Van Tilburg et al. 2017), and Pacific OCS (ICF International et al. 2013). The information resulting from these previous studies has been crucial for NHPA Section 106 and NEPA consultations across all BOEM program areas. The U.S. Pacific Island territories have an extensive maritime history, dating back thousands of years. The islands and surrounding waters also saw substantial military activity during World War II, including the Battles of Saipan and Guam. As a result, potentially hundreds of underwater cultural heritage sites, as well as unexploded ordnance sites, may be located around these islands. Currently, no synthesized baseline dataset is available for the U.S. Pacific Island territories. Additionally, BOEM has no experience working with indigenous communities in this area and identifying protocols for engagement and consultation with these communities will be a critical first step for meaningful and respectful engagement. Information acquired from this effort will address stakeholder comments and support the National Strategy for Ocean Mapping, Exploring, and Characterizing the US EEZ.

Objective(s): The objective of this study is to acquire and synthesize archival data on submerged and terrestrial archaeological resources and traditional cultural properties that could be affected by offshore leasing activities.

Methods: The proposed study will accomplish the following:

1. Compile data from archival and secondary sources of known, reported, and potential underwater sites on the Pacific OCS within the EEZ of American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI, and synthesize this information into a geo-referenced database.
2. Collect data from archival and secondary sources to develop a geo-referenced database of terrestrial properties listed and potentially eligible for listing on the NRHP.
3. Compile and summarize ethnographic information from indigenous communities regarding traditional use and traditional cultural properties that could be impacted by offshore development.
4. Working with local indigenous communities, develop guidance documents that identify best practices and protocols for incorporating traditional knowledge into indigenous cultural landscape analyses for NHPA and NEPA reviews.
5. Prepare a final report(s) of findings that details these efforts and provides an historic context of site types that can be expected in the project areas.

Specific Research Question(s):

1. What are the types and potential locations of underwater cultural heritage sites within the EEZ of the U.S. Pacific Island territories that could be impacted by offshore wind development or marine mineral extraction?
2. What types of terrestrial archaeological sites or historic properties could be affected by offshore wind development?

3. What is the best way to consult with the indigenous communities of American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI?
4. What types of traditional cultural properties need to be considered in relation to offshore wind development or marine mineral extraction?

Current Status: The cooperative agreement was awarded on September 25, 2023, and the post-award meeting was held on October 22, 2023.

Publications Completed: None

Affiliated WWW Sites: None

References:

- ICF International, Davis Geoarchaeological Research, and Southeastern Archaeological Research. 2013. Inventory and analysis of coastal and submerged archaeological site occurrence on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific OCS Region, Camarillo, CA. OCS Study BOEM 2013-0115. 280 p. plus appendices. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/5357.pdf>
- NOAA Maritime Heritage Program. 2017. The unseen landscape: inventory and assessment of submerged cultural resources in Hawai'i. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific OCS Region, Camarillo, CA. OCS Study BOEM 2017-021. 240 p. with appendices. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/5620.pdf>
- Pearson CE, James Jr. SR, Krivor MC, El Darragi SD, Cunningham L. 2003. Refining and revising the Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Region high-probability model for historic shipwrecks: Final Report. Volume II: Technical Narrative. U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study MMS 2003-061, 195 p., 3 volumes. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/3034.pdf>
- TRC Environmental Corporation. 2012. Inventory and analysis of archaeological site occurrence on the Atlantic outer continental shelf. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study BOEM 2012-008. 324 p. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/5196.pdf>
- Van Tilburg H, Watson TK, Faria K, Hoomanawanui K, Ho-Lastiama I, Ritte W, Maly K, Nahoopii, M, Horcajo K, Kaupiko K, Ball D. 2017. A guidance document for characterizing native Hawaiian cultural landscapes. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific OCS Region, Camarillo, CA. OCS Study BOEM 2017-023. 208 p. with appendices. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/5621.pdf>
- Watson TK, Hoomanawanui K, Thurman R, Thao B, Boyne K. 2017. Na 'Ikena I Kai (Seaward Viewsheds): inventory of terrestrial properties for assessment of marine viewsheds on the eight Main Hawaiian Islands. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific OCS Region, Camarillo, CA. OCS Study BOEM 2017-022. 137 p. with appendices. <https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/5619.pdf>

¹ Offshore Wind for Territories Act, H.R. 6665, was passed originally by the U.S. House of Representatives on 12/10/2018. It was reintroduced as H.R. 1014 on 2/6/2019 and in the Senate as S. 499 on 2/14/2019. As currently

written, the text of the proposed legislation directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study for conducting wind lease sales on the OCS of U.S. territories and submit the results of that study within 18 months. The American Energy First Act, H.R. 4294, was introduced on 9/11/2019. It is expected the new Congress will consider similar bills moving forward.