Meeting Summary

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas Environmental Organizations Engagement Meeting

Thursday, December 1, 2022

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. ET

I. Introduction

On December 1, 2022, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) convened a meeting between BOEM staff and the environmental and conservation interests across the Central Atlantic region to discuss the "Draft Wind Energy Areas" (WEAs). The virtual meeting was held via the Zoom platform for the purpose of sharing BOEM's plans for the Central Atlantic Region including analysis. planning activities and schedules for the draft WEAs in the Central Atlantic.

The meeting's stated objectives were to:

- Share Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Region's upcoming plans and activities on draft Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) within the Central Atlantic region.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to discuss issues related to the draft WEAs.
- Provide information on how public input can be submitted on the draft WEAs.

The meeting agenda is available in Appendix A.

This meeting summary document summarizes input from environmental organizations. It focuses on discussion rather than the formal presentations made and is not intended to be a detailed transcript. The meeting was facilitated by Kearns & West (K&W).

This meeting summary is organized into the following sections:

II. Discussion Highlights

A. BOEM Welcome and Opening Statements

Karen Baker (*Chief – BOEM/Office of Renewable Energy Programs)* welcomed participants to the meeting. She clarified BOEM's role in offshore wind development and reiterated the value of gathering input from stakeholders in the Fishing Community and related sectors as part of the planning activities for offshore wind in the Central Atlantic. Ms. Baker gave a geographic overview of the Central Atlantic region – inclusive of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. She acknowledged that some potential conflicts have already been highlighted within the draft WEAs and noted that concerns heard during the meeting would help BOEM narrow down the final WEAs. Ms. Baker concluded by reminding participants of the active 30-day comment period and thanked them for their input.

B. Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas

Bridgette Duplantis (Chief – BOEM/Leasing and Financial Responsibility Section) presented on the development of the Draft WEAs in the Central Atlantic region. The presentation included an overview of BOEM's offshore wind planning and analysis process and the steps have already been completed. Ms. Duplantis outlined the comments and feedback received from recent engagements with stakeholders and industry actors and how that input was incorporated into the draft WEAs. Then, she introduced James Morris from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and asked him to provide additional context on how the original Call Areas were winnowed down to the draft WEAs.

James Morris (Marine Ecologist at NOAA/ National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)) highlighted the partnership between BOEM and NCCOS where his team uses spatial modeling to support BOEM's development of the WEAs. Mr. Morris explained the NCCOS "Suitability Model" – a model that identifies ocean areas within the Call Areas that offer the lowest potential for use conflict and environmental impacts based upon a series of preordained criteria. Examples of data layers included as suitability sub-models include:

- Various constraints
- National security considerations
- Industry and operations activities
- Natural resources
- Fisheries' use
- Wind capacity

NCCOS and BOEM combined all the sub-models to determine final suitability scores and inform which ocean areas were included in the draft WEAs.

Bridgette Duplantis provided an overview of the eight draft WEAs. Ms. Duplantis walked through the attributes of each WEA within the larger Call Area and explained potential conflicts under consideration. Sarah Vaughn (National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Coordinator - BOEM/Central Atlantic) reviewed NEPA requirements relative to decision-making on offshore wind development. She told participants that BOEM is seeking input on its environmental assessment (EA) of renewable energy leases on the Outer Continental Shelf. Ms. Vaughn reminded participants that the EA will analyze certain impacts of leasing activities but will not analyze project-specific layouts or considerations; that analysis will come later in the process once a lease is obtained and a project plan is submitted. Bridgette Duplantis concluded the presentation portion of the agenda by outlining BOEM's projected timeline for offshore wind in the Central Atlantic and providing information on how to submit public comments to BOEM before the period ends on December 16, 2022.

A recording of BOEM's Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas can be found at the following link: https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/central-atlantic

Bridgette Duplantis, James Morris, and Sarah Vaughn then opened the floor for clarifying questions specific to the information presented to participants from the PowerPoint slides. A summary of the questions posed and the responses from BOEM and NOAA staff is below.

Question 1: What other bird data was incorporated on species groups other than the black-capped petrel? Additionally, how were findings from the "Wind Farms and Birds: An Updated Analysis of The Effects of Wind Farms on Birds, and Best Practice Guidance on Integrated Planning and Impact Assessment" incorporated into the identification of the draft WEAs?

Response: BOEM included information for black-capped petrel within the modeling. In the initial review, it appeared that there was relatively little overlap with other bird species in that area. BOEM and NCOSS considered bird sensitivity and vulnerabilities. They also conduct ongoing consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on other bird species. Within your comments, please include information about specific data sets or species that you feel need to be reconsidered in this spatial planning process.

Question 2: Can BOEM comment on the viability of offshore wind development in Areas E and F on the OCS? While Europe is using floating offshore wind, I am not aware of any floating offshore wind turbines that have reached the planning stage within the U.S.

Response: BOEM received several nominations from wind developers in those deep water sites. Within their nominations, the developers noted that the timeline for development would be longer as better technologies are advanced.

Question 3: Can BOEM define "longer timeline" for deploying offshore wind floating technology?

Response: BOEM cannot define that at this time. Floating technology has been deployed in other parts of the world, but it is still new and developing. Those deployments have been in shallow waters. By releasing the Draft WEA's, BOEM is better able to determine the viability of these areas. Today, BOEM is explicitly asking for more information to help inform how to move forward with those deep-water areas.

Question 4: Is BOEM considering fisheries datasets other than vessel monitoring system (VMS)?

Response: BOEM looked at a range of datasets for developing the potential call areas. For instance, vessel trip reporting (VTR) data was considered, however it was determined that it was dated relative the analysis needed. BOEM is consulting with NMFS to incorporate other revenue and catch data. You can expect to see this additional data in the future.

Question 5: What is the suitability threshold for BOEM to determine the viability of an area? For example, if there is data showing that there are scallops or other organisms in a 10-acre cell, does there need to be 1,000 scallops, 10,000 scallops, 100,000 scallops, or so on to inform suitability?

Response: There is no ocean space that is free of conflicts. If we were to overlay all data layers, the screen would be black. The good news is that there is great data to better understand the ocean. These types of questions about thresholds can be asked for every data layer. The way BOEM and NCOSS deal with this challenge is to put data within a suitability model to understand the relative suitability. Rather than make decisions on a specific number of scallops, the model can show viewers that there is relatively more scallop fishing in certain grid cells than others. The model also considers other data, such as other fisheries, economy, and environment. This modeling produces a heat map, which is what BOEM is now seeking comment on. The purpose of putting this data on a map for public comment is to understand the level of interaction and compatibility and give all stakeholders the same information to respond to in context for the highest suitable areas.

Question 6: How is BOEM factoring in right whale migratory pathways into this process?

Response: BOEM reported that there is new spatial data for protected species. Peer-reviewed methodologies were developed within the Southeast Stock Opportunity Analysis that combine data layers for all protected species. This was done in collaboration with NMFS – which recommended specific scoring and weighting approaches. This new approach looks at the status and trend of species. For instance, if there is a declining, unstable, or unknown species, they get the lowest compatibility score because they are considered "sensitive." Alternatively, if you have species that is more stable and not as sensitive, they will receive a higher compatibility score. This scoring is combined with spatial data to understand overall sensitivities. This is one approach for regional analysis that is also used for habitats, marine life, and birds. Importantly, BOEM also considers other models and tools for draft WEA development, so analysis is not done within a vacuum.

Question 7: For Area A, will the secondary cells be removed if the finalized USCG navigational safety fairways overlap within this area?

Response: Yes, those secondary cells would be removed if the final fairways overlap.

Question 8: Is this public comment period an opportunity to iterate concerns about lease stipulations? If not, when are those kinds of comments welcome?

Response: Yes, BOEM will take all comments at this point. Any information for lease stipulations might be better served within the proposed sale notice stage, however all comments are welcome at this time.

Question 9: What specific information was included in the model on deep sea corals? Where is this located?

Response: Initially, BOEM reviewed the Frank Lautenberg polygon for the coral protection area, as well as discrete locations of observed corals. It was decided early on that BOEM would constrain or remove areas of observed corals. However, we maintained keeping in the broader coral protection area to receive more understanding of interest from industry. If we were to proceed with a lease sale in that environment, we would take a closer look at coral observations.

Question 10: Can BOEM specify areas of greater activity for right whales within these draft WEAs?

Response: BOEM encourages you to review the BOEM and NCOSS Draft Report: Development of the Central Atlantic Wind Energy Areas. Specifically, the appendix includes figures from NOAA with respect to North Atlantic right whale and other protected species. Right whales typically migrate within the Central Atlantic and through the area. As such, their densities are lower compared to Massachusetts and Rhode Island where the whales may be feeding or mating. For this area, BOEM is considering the mitigations that can applied to lease areas in the event that a right whale would appear.

Question 11: How many ongoing fisheries science studies are underway in which you are still collecting data on species such as sea bass, flounder, right whale, birds? What resources, such as local or state colleges or government facilities, are being used?

Response: BOEM is one of several entities conducting fisheries science research. BOEM's website has a list of all fisheries-related surveys that are being conducting across electromagnetic fields (EMF), acoustic impacts, baseline habitat data, and more. BOEM also looks at monitoring results from existing structures like the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind pilot project or European projects to better understand impacts over time.

Question 12: How does BOEM monitor and review developer-funded studies*?*

Response: Research being conducted by a developer is typically included within a Constructions and Operations Plan (COP). Once the developer submits this COP or a proposal, BOEM reviews the study and compares it to other similar studies to verify its integrity and confirm assessed impacts.

C. Feedback and Dialogue

During this part of the meeting, participants posed comments to BOEM and shared feedback about the offshore wind information discussed in the meeting.

Comment 1: I appreciate the clarity of the presentation and the detail with which you walked through the spatial model. My message is that we need to move fast to deploy offshore wind in the Central Atlantic. There is tremendous offshore wind potential in this area. I am confident that we can develop significant offshore WEAs while moving quickly, ensuring transparency, establishing standards for environmental integrity, and avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating impacts to wildlife and the marine ecosystem. Every energy source has some impact; however, compared to the impacts of continued fossil fuel extraction, BOEM should be aggressively shifting its focus away from offshore oil and gas development and towards offshore wind development. I'm encouraged by the thoroughness of the process and want to thank everyone for their time, energy, and thoughtfulness, as well as the opportunity to express "Environment for the Americas" strong support for offshore wind.

Comment 2: The construction of wind turbines will seriously impact the right whale's feeding, prey, calving, and migratory patterns. BOEM should consider declaring exclusionary zones in these areas - similar to the exclusionary zones for the military and NASA. BOEM must consider that right whales are climate champions who provide the food basis for the aromatic microbiology in the ocean which provide 25% of our oxygen. It is BOEM's responsibility (per the Endangered Species Act) to ensure that development does not jeopardize the right whales' existence and habitat. I know that BOEM is considering this, but there are conflicting

interests. I wish there was more information on the right whales and offshore wind. I know that BOEM put out a study with NOAA on this and I commented on that. I just want to put more emphasis on this consideration.

Comment 3: Many biologists have looked at bird monitoring and realized that this is a large data gap. I applaud BOEM for awarding the wildlife and offshore wind effort being led by Duke, and other similar efforts to gather data. However, since this data will not be available to inform this process, I would like to see greater emphasis from BOEM on addressing data gaps. Additionally, I would like more information about the processes in place to recall or withdraw a lease area if future data were to show that the lease area is a hot spot for bird migration. I would also like to see lease stipulations that require lease holders to conduct extensive monitoring investigations to proactively address bird data gaps.

Comment 4: At the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, we are working with stakeholders in Maryland for a public policy proposal to increase offshore energy goals and address transmission. A key part of the initiative is to implement the "Climate Solutions Now Act" requiring Maryland to reduce emissions by 2031. Clean energy deployment will be a key part of that emissions goal. The Chesapeake Climate Action Network views offshore wind as Maryland's most significant clean energy solution due to the state's location, available technology, and workforce hubs. We encourage BOEM to move forward with the secondary lease areas outlined in today's presentation and deconflict as much as possible. We are interested in seeing 80,000 – 90,000 acres available in each area.

Comment 5: I want to encourage BOEM to conduct greater fisheries science. I would also like to note that offshore wind turbines cannot be separate from diesel fuels or fossil fuels because of how turbines are made. Diesel fuel is used to manufacture the turbines, oil is used to lubricate their systems, and diesel generators may be used onshore to connect energy into the gird.

> *At this juncture there were several comments made more in the form of a conversation between and among stakeholders critiquing various claims. As they were not directed toward BOEM nor concretely referencing the Draft WEA's, they were not added to this summary. Participants who did engage in those exchanges are welcome to submit their comments on the regulations.gov website if they have not been captured herein.*

D. Next Steps

BOEM staff thanked meeting attendees for their participation, reminded participants that BOEM values their feedback highly, and outlined the following next steps in the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas process:

- The meeting summary and recording of BOEM's informational presentation will be shared with participants in the weeks following the meeting.
- Any feedback on the draft Wind Energy Areas should be shared with Bridgette Duplantis (Bridgette.duplantis@boem.gov) by December 16, 2022.
- The Central Atlantic Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting is expected to take place in Spring 2023. BOEM will transmit calendar invitations and meeting materials to interested tribes in advance of the meeting.

III. Appendix

A. Agenda

Agenda

Virtual Meeting: Environmental Organization's Feedback on
Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas
December 1, 2022
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

Meeting Information: Zoom
Register here: https://kearnswest.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZctde6qrzkrE9Bmy1EUNGit6XPHf6iwTO9U

Meeting Objectives

- Share Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Region's upcoming plans and activities on draft Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) within the Central Atlantic region.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to discuss issues related to the draft WEAs.
- Provide information on how formal comments can be submitted on the draft WEAs.

Time (ET)	Item	Lead
1:25 p.m.	***Join the Webinar***	• *All*
1:30 p.m.	**Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Statements**	• BOEM
1:40 p.m.	**Webinar Instructions & Agenda Review**	• Adam R. Saslow, Senior Facilitator, Kearns & West
1:50 p.m.	**Presentations on the Central Atlantic Draft Wind Energy Areas** *With an opportunity for participants to ask clarifying questions (noting that the next session offers the chance to opine on the strengths and weaknesses of the draft WEAs).*	• Bridgette Duplantis, Central Atlantic Team Lead, BOEM • James Morris, Marine Ecologist, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), NOAA • Sarah Vaughn, Central Atlantic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Coordinator
2:30 p.m.	**Feedback and Dialogue** *An opportunity for participants to request additional information on the draft WEAs. Representatives from conservation organizations, NGOs and other similar interests will interact with BOEM officials to discuss key concerns, elements that resonate and other issues that arise.*	• Facilitated by Adam R. Saslow, Senior Facilitator, Kearns & West
3:20 p.m.	**How to Make an Official Public Comment** *BOEM officials will explain how and when an official public comment may be entered into the federal record.*	• Bridgette Duplantis, Central Atlantic Team Lead, BOEM
3:25 p.m.	**Wrap Up and Next Steps**	• David MacDuffee, Chief, Projects and Coordination Branch, BOEM
3:30 p.m.	***Adjourn***	• *All*