

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area Development Scallop and Clam Stakeholder Meeting

January 6, 2022, 10AM- 12PM via Zoom

Meeting Summary

This meeting summary is not intended to be a complete transcript or record of the meeting proceedings but rather serves to capture the high-level themes and issues discussed. 50 attendees were present. The presentation shown during the meeting can be found on the project website: <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/central-atlantic-activities>

Meeting Purpose

- Provide information and answer questions about the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leasing process and the proposed Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area for offshore wind development off the coast of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.
- Gather broad feedback and input from clam and scallop fishing stakeholders on the initial draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area.

Welcome and Introductions

Jim Bennett, Program Manager for Renewable Energy Programs at BOEM, welcomed participants and provided an overview of the agency's responsibilities. He discussed the meeting purpose and the agency's interest in obtaining input as part of the draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area identification, discussing ocean uses and biological and physical resources within the draft planning area, and discussing collaboration opportunities between BOEM and the fishing industry. Mr. Bennett emphasized the agency's commitment to increased transparency and collaboration with stakeholders and attempt to identify potential impacts and avoid conflicts through engagement with stakeholders early in process. He shared that BOEM has adopted a regional approach to stakeholder engagement and will gather input from stakeholders and the public several times throughout the process. In closing, he explained that BOEM believes offshore wind can successfully co-exist with the maritime industry and reiterated the agency's commitment to engaging with the maritime industry throughout the process.

Patrick Field, a facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute, welcomed attendees, thanked them for their participation, and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Presentations

[Overview of the Renewable Energy Development Process and Draft Central Atlantic Planning Area](#)

Bridgette Duplantis, Program Analyst at BOEM, introduced the Central Atlantic Planning Area

which is located more than 20 miles off the Atlantic Coast. She provided an overview of BOEM's four stage renewable energy leasing and areas identification process. She explained that the Central Atlantic Planning Area process is early in the Planning and Analysis phase and that the planning area will be winnowed down into a Call Area and subsequent Lease Areas later in the process. She discussed BOEM's stakeholder and public outreach activities associated with the project which will include a Central Atlantic Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting on February 16, 2022. She explained that the draft Planning Area has already been winnowed down to three smaller areas to avoid significant impacts to existing uses and biological resources, particularly those near Atlantic Canyons and the Outer Continental Shelf break. She presented several slides showing different data sets that BOEM will consider during the area identification process.

Clam and Scallop Fishing Activity in the Central Atlantic

Brandon Jensen, BOEM Fisheries Biologist, presented various types of clam and scallop data in the planning area. The key points of data discussed were surf clam and ocean quahog from 2015-2016 from VMS; scallop information from 2015 to 2016 from VMS; Dredge information from 2011 to 2015 from VTR; Sea Scallop Rotational Area information; Atlantic Fishing Revenue Intensity from 2007-2012; and NOAA comments in terms of commercial fishing from all the areas of the Planning Area.

Ms. Duplantis concluded the presentation with an overview of process milestones and next steps.

Discussion

Patrick Field invited members of the clam and scallop industry to share their comments and questions. Many attendees had deep concerns about the economic impact of these planning areas given current market factors that exist. Of note, many highlighted the displacement that could happen to their fisheries in vessels within area 3 as well as transit concerns near Ocean City. Another important note is that many want updated data from more recent years to be incorporated into these studies before the process moves along. Finally, participants would like to be kept better informed of when these meetings are happening. More detail on these key points and themes of the discussion are recorded below:

Location, Displacement, and Economic Impact

- One of the attendees gave a detailed breakdown as to how the planning area could have substantial effects on how many vessels operate and highlighted that the areas where surf clams and ocean quahogs are contracted have changed significantly over the years. With the possibility of where these turbines could be in area 3, vessels may be forced farther south which means clam vessels can't make larger trips without hurting the product due to time to shore. In addition, larger vessels may not be able to work in wind areas either depending on the spacing among turbines. Attendees expressed concern that vessels for both clams and scallops could be pushed into unproductive areas and hurt consumer product which leads to a larger economic impact.

- A request was made that turbines could be separated 2 miles by 2 miles which could lead to coexistence between fishing and wind farms.
- Many attendees had concerns over the economic impact of where the leases could be. BOEM staff highlighted that preliminary economic analysis is conducted during the process and these meetings will give the team a head-start on identifying spatial area needs.
- Participants highlighted that Area 3 is a major area of concern as fishing intensity is high in that area. There is a feeling that BOEM is not looking into the potential impact of harming fishing in that entire area. It was requested for BOEM to work with the NOAA survey branch to identify alternative fishing areas given existing survey data if currently high intensity fishing areas get removed. This was of important concern from those coming out of Maryland and New Jersey.
- Other members requested to put all leasing areas overlaid on a NOAA nautical chart.
- One attendee requested that BOEM include considerations from New Jersey fisheries as they are losing access to surf clams due to offshore wind developments elsewhere and are starting to go south towards these proposed lease areas.

Data

- Participants requested more recent data be used and incorporated as soon as possible. One participant highlighted that some of the VMS data used in 2015 to 2016 were not heavy production years. Other participants indicated that 2021 was a record year for squid production and that should be incorporated on the maps as soon as possible.
- It was requested that any new charts be presented to industry members as soon as they are available.
- Attendees felt the economic data being used was not appropriate given that mackerel, squid, and butterfish all require different permits which means the financial information is off in the analysis.
- Attendees noted that there are small fishing areas near US Wind that should be put into the data set as well as areas to the west of Area 1.
- Some participants would like to see Area 3 follow the 60-meter contour and bring western boundary in towards the shore to be consistent and to avoid fishing areas right on the shelf break.
- David MacDuffee from BOEM stated that BOEM understands the need for more recent data and encouraged attendees to send them any information and data sets they have that they would like to see incorporated for modeling purposes. He also stated that BOEM will work on putting more layers on the MARCO portal as well as new datasets as they come in.

Ecological Concerns

- Participants expressed concerns that the various testing and construction activities would negatively impact and do long-term damage to ecologically sensitive areas and fishing habitat areas. BOEM team members mentioned environmental surveys are

conducted throughout this process to understand the potential impacts to the ocean and ocean life and promised to take the concerns of the group into consideration.

Conclusion

Patrick Field shared that the meeting summary and presentation would be made available to attendees and invited participants to share additional comments via email. He also reminded attendees that a formal public comment period for the project would take place after the task force meeting in February.

Bridgette Duplantis invited participants to send additional comments and information to her e-mail at Bridgette.duplantis@boem.gov.

Jim Bennet, BOEM, thanked attendees for their time, engagement, and constructive suggestions.