

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area Development Trawl and Mixed Trawl

Jan. 5, 2022, 1- 3PM 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. 53 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 members of the trawl and mixed trawl fishing industry on the initial draft Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area.

Welcome and Introductions

Jim Bennett, Program Manager for the Office of Renewable Energy Programs at BOEM, welcomed participants and provided an overview of the agency's responsibilities and clean energy goals. 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, exchanging information about ocean uses and biological and physical resources within the draft planning area, and facilitating a conversation about collaboration opportunities. Mr. Bennett emphasized the importance of feedback from the fishing industry in BOEM's decision making process as well as the agency's commitment to increased transparency and collaboration with stakeholders. He shared that BOEM has adopted a regional approach to stakeholder engagement and will invite input from stakeholders and the public several more times 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 BOEM's Renewable Energy Development Process and the Central Atlantic Draft Planning Area

Bridgette Duplantis, Program Analyst at BOEM, introduced the Central Atlantic Planning Area off the Atlantic Coast between Delaware and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The draft planning area begins over 20 miles away from shore and ends approximately 81 miles from shore. 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 smaller Call for Information Area which will be published in the federal registry. After gathering comments on the Call Area from the public, stakeholders, and federal partners, BOEM will then winnow down the Call Area into smaller Lease Areas. She discussed the various 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.

Ms. Duplantis explained that the original draft Planning Area has already been winnowed down to Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3 to avoid conflicts with existing uses and impacts to biological resources, particularly those near Atlantic Canyons and the Outer Continental Shelf break, a NASA Danger Zone, and USCG proposed shipping safety fairways that overlap with the draft planning area. She noted that BOEM is in constant communication with USCG and will continue to collaborate with them as their proposals are further developed. While a 10-year federal moratorium on offshore wind development off the coast of North Carolina will go into effect in July 2022, Ms. Duplantis shared that the State of North Carolina has requested that BOEM move forward to analyze the area and identify wind energy areas off the coast for future potential leasing. This moratorium does not apply to the Kitty Hawk WEA which is already under lease.

Trawl, Mixed Trawl and Pelagic Longlines

Brandon Jensen, BOEM Fisheries Biologist, presented data showing fishing vessel activity related to Herring, Mackerel, Squid, Groundfish, and Bottom Trawl represented in VMS and VTR data. He showed a map displaying Atlantic Fishing Revenue Intensity developed by NOAA that shows fishing revenue and economic value between 2007-2012. He noted that the data is preliminary and show that the highest economic value in Area 1 and 2 is Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish and Sea Scallops are the highest value industry in Area 3.

Bridgette Duplantis concluded the presentation with a summary of project milestones, next steps, and upcoming opportunities to provide public input,

Discussion

After the presentations, Patrick Field invited members of the fishing industry to share their comments and questions. Several fishing industry members provided feedback about the proposed Central Atlantic Renewable Energy Planning Area as well as BOEM's offshore wind development process. Key concerns and issues raised include:

Draft Planning Area Boundaries

- Observations that the proposed wind energy planning area overlaps with many existing fishing industry activities, in particular squid fishing which requires maneuverability
- Concerns that mobile gear fishing activities will be restricted and unsafe inside offshore wind development areas including trawling for fluke, striped bass, or mixed trawl and scallop and clam dredges.
- Concern of any offshore wind development beyond the Outer Continental Shelf within the Frank R. Lautenberg Deep-Sea Coral Protection Areaⁱ which was developed in a collaborative process by the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council to protect 38,000

square miles of known and likely coral reef habitats in the Mid-Atlantic from bottom-tending fishing gear such as trawls and dredges.

- Request for moving the western boundaries of the proposed Planning Area 3 as close as possible to the shore to avoid impacts with fishing activities near the shelf.
- Concerns about the impacts of offshore wind development on highly migratory species.
- Requests that BOEM assess the impacts of floating cables to mobile gear fisheries and remove areas where cables are expected to run through or near fishing grounds from consideration for development before the process invites developers to submit interest.
- Requests that BOEM identify and remove fishing interest conflicts before assessing interest from developers.

Fishing Activity Data

- Frustration about gaps and discrepancies in the data presented, in particular:
 - Current fishing activities are not represented in data gathered between 2007-2012
 - Many vessels from the New York fleet are shorter than 65-feet-long and are not included in the VTR data on bottom trawl fishing activity
 - Inconsistencies between the fishing activities within the proposed planning area and the data included in NOAA's preliminary report.
 - *BOEM and NOAA staff clarified that the planning areas were adjusted which explains some of the inconsistencies and the maps presented do not include any data shared from the southeast fisheries, a different jurisdictional regional within NOAA.*
- A request for access to BOEM's data sources to analyze the data.
- A request to see the data presented on NOAA nautical charts before the public comment period in February.

Fishing Revenue Data

- Observations that the VTR data of a mobile fleet is inadequate for analyzing mobile gear fisheries as it provides only one latitudinal point and one longitudinal point and has not been successfully used to understand economic value of the actual trawls.
- Suggestions that BOEM match VMS and VTR data and compare that with Captain's reports to accurately assess fishing revenues.
- Requests that BOEM consider on-shore communities, infrastructure, processing plants, and other multipliers, not just ex-vessel value, to assess fishing revenues and analyze the impacts of displacement.

Stakeholder Engagement Process and Timeline

- Frustration that attendees did not have adequate time to prepare feedback for BOEM because they did not receive the presentation in advance.
- Concerns that fishing industry stakeholders do not have adequate time and resources to engage with BOEM on so many projects with overlapping timelines.
- Fatigue with engagement in development processes and feelings that input from fishing industry members and representatives has been ignored by BOEM.

- Requests to slow the speed of the development process to allow for more data collection and analysis and engagement with stakeholders and the public.

Meeting Conclusion

After the discussion period, Patrick Field invited participants to share additional comments via email along with a reminder that a formal public comment period for the project would take place after the task force meeting in February. He shared that the project team will share the meeting summary with participants within the following weeks and noted that the presentation slides will be posted on the project websiteⁱⁱ.

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

Jim Bennet thanked attendees for their time, comments, and questions.

ⁱ https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/frank_r_lautenberg_deep_sea_coral_protection_areas_map.jpg

ⁱⁱ <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/central-atlantic-activities>