Updated May 9, 2022

# Gulf of Maine
# Request for Interest (RFI) Development Framework

BOEM's offshore wind leasing strategy for 2021-2025 includes the goal of holding a commercial lease sale within the Gulf of Maine in 2024. To achieve this goal, BOEM has decided to start with a request for interest (RFI). Beginning with an RFI will allow BOEM to gauge commercial interest in offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine, while also maximizing the opportunity for the public to engage and provide input.

This document explains BOEM's framework for developing the Gulf of Maine RFI, both in terms of the spatial extent of the RFI area, as well as the data and information BOEM will seek from the public to inform subsequent analyses in the planning and leasing process (e.g., Call Area, Wind Energy Areas).

BOEM is sharing this RFI Development Framework for consideration and discussion at the May 19, 2022, Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting.

**Defining the RFI Area**

Before determining the extent of the RFI Area, BOEM first had to define a Planning Area for the Gulf of Maine commercial planning and leasing process (Figure 1). This Planning Area is roughly bounded on the west, north, and east by BOEM's jurisdiction for renewable energy activities on the outer continental shelf (OCS), ranging 3nmi from shore to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). BOEM delineated the southern boundary of the Planning Area by looking at the physiographic, oceanographic, and biotic variables that together uniquely define the Gulf of Maine.[1] This Planning Area also avoids any overlap with the Planning Area used for the previous Massachusetts/Rhode Island planning and leasing process.

[1] The southern boundary of BOEM's Gulf of Maine Planning Area is an adaptation of the Gulf of Maine Ecological Production Unit defined in the "State of the Ecosystem Report" (Northeast Fisheries Science Center, 2021).

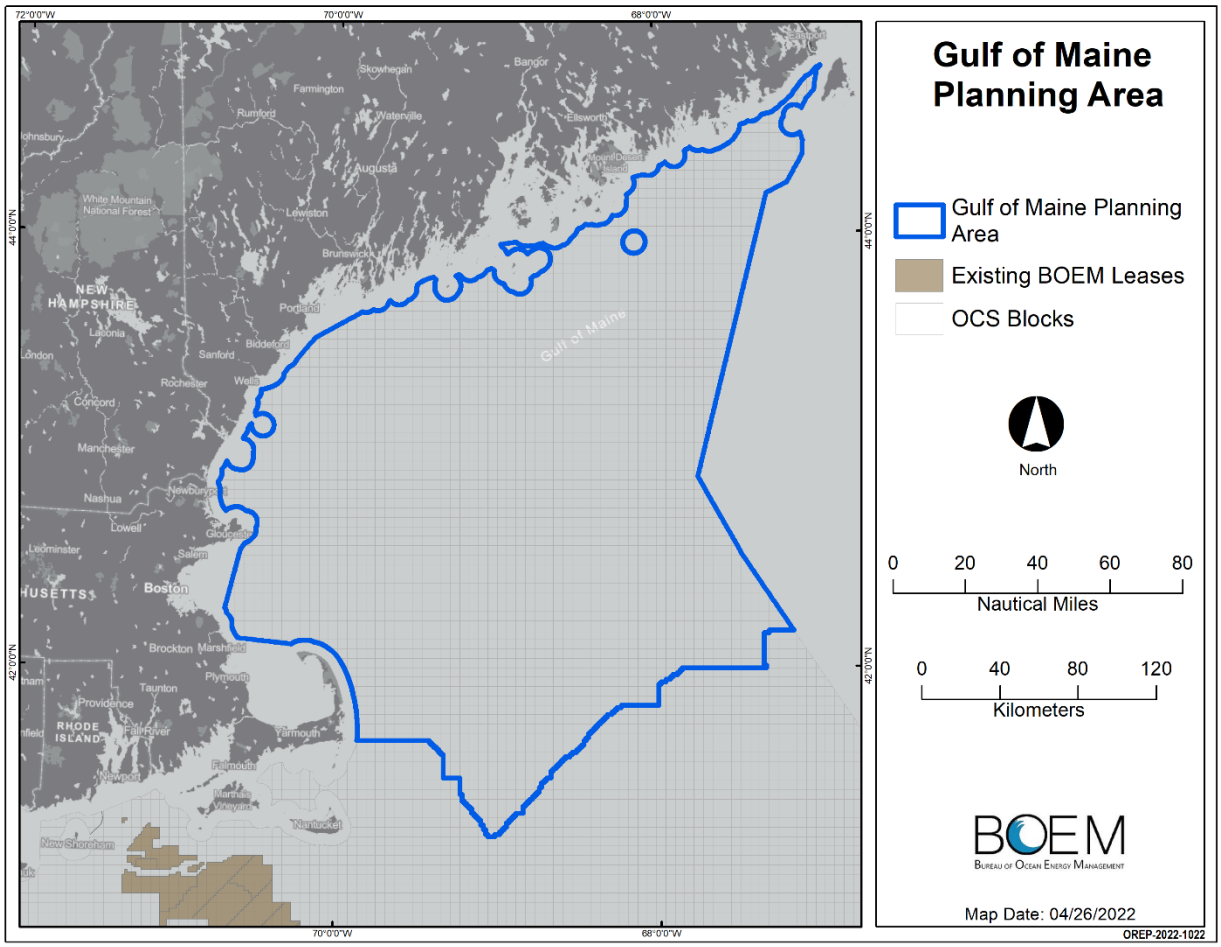


*Figure 1: BOEM Gulf of Maine Planning Area*

Next, BOEM seeks to refine the Planning Area to determine the extent of the RFI Area. This involves removing areas that are incompatible with offshore wind energy development.

**Incompatible Areas** are areas in which offshore wind energy development ***cannot occur*** as a result of law, jurisdiction, or technical considerations, resulting in those areas being excluded from the RFI Area.

a. National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Marine Sanctuary System, or any National Monument (§585.204)
b. Existing Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS), fairways, or other internationally recognized navigation measures
c. Existing BOEM lease areas
d. Unsolicited lease request areas that are the subject of a separate request for competitive interest (e.g., State of Maine's requested research lease)

Following removal of these Incompatible Areas, BOEM generated the following DRAFT RFI Area for consideration and discussion at the Task Force Meeting (Figure 2):

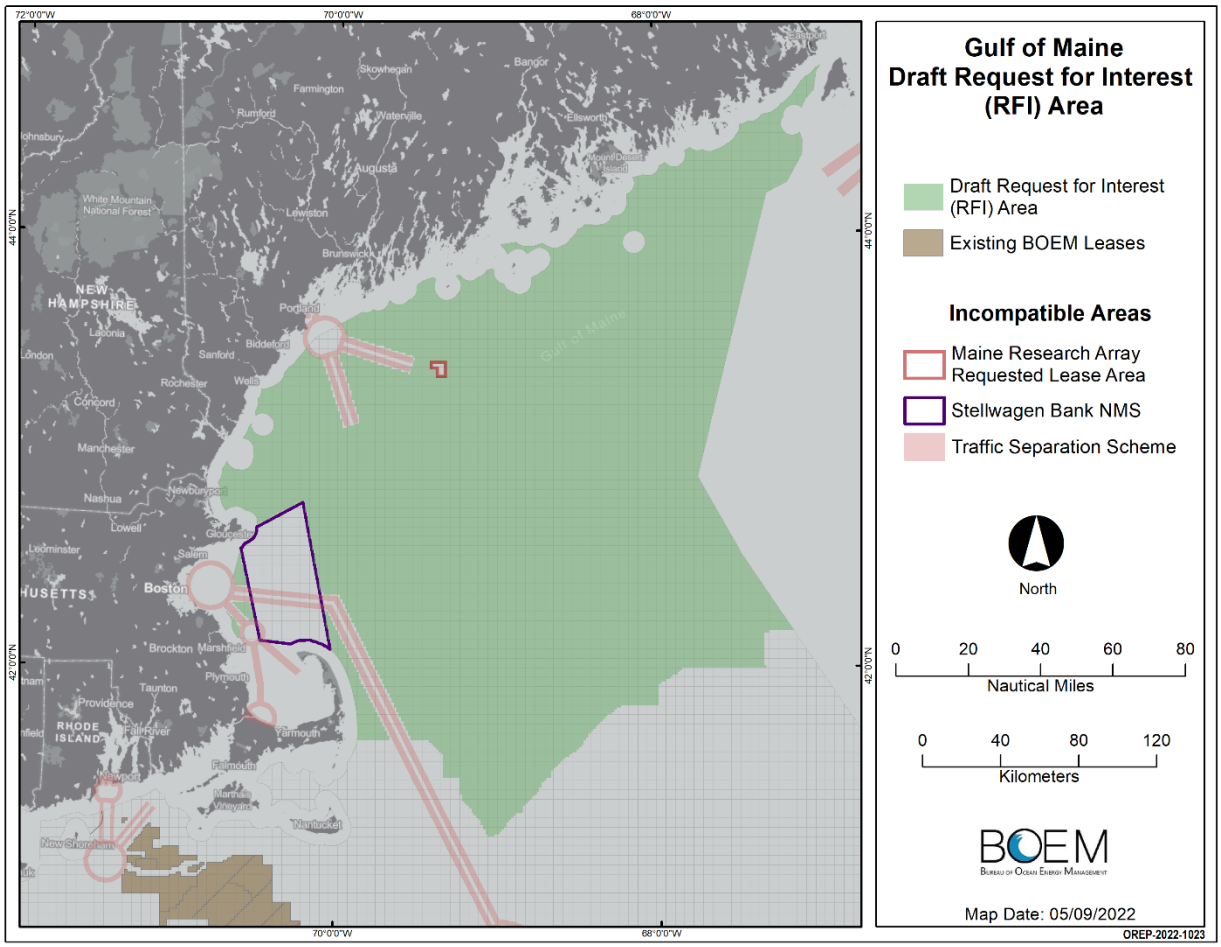


*Figure 2: DRAFT RFI Area following the removal of incompatible areas from the Planning Area.*

***NOTE**: An RFI is largely an information gathering step, both in terms of development interest from industry and to solicit data and concerns from potentially affected parties. As such, BOEM retains discretion to keep apparently conflicted spaces in the RFI Area in order to ask the public for information on how best to define a feature and inform its potential removal during subsequent phases of the planning/leasing process (e.g., Call Area, Wind Energy Areas).*

**RFI Requested Information from Interested or Affected Parties**

1. **Requested Information Categories:** These are important topics or datasets for which BOEM is seeking further information to help inform subsequent phases of the planning/leasing process in the Gulf of Maine.
    a. Commercial and recreational fishing data, including spatial data (e.g., landings, value, vessel traffic, home ports). Species and sectors of interest **include, but are not limited to**:
        i. Highly migratory species
        ii. Lobster/Jonah crab
        iii. Monkfish
        iv. Multispecies (groundfish)

v. Northern shrimp
vi. Ocean quahog
vii. Pelagics (e.g., herring, mackerel, squid)
viii. Scallops
ix. Small mesh multispecies (e.g., whiting)

b. Protected Species/Habitat
    i. Presence of endangered, threatened, or sensitive avian/marine life
    ii. Presence and proximity to designated ESA Critical Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat/ Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC)
c. Climate change impacts
    i. Fisheries/protected species distribution (spatial/temporal)
d. Current and future Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) interests
    i. USCG PARS
e. Maritime navigation/safety issues (e.g., commerce routes, port access)
f. Presence of historic properties/landmarks/districts
g. Tribal issues of concern and indigenous traditional knowledge
h. Community profiles, resiliency, and socioeconomic vulnerability
i. Presence of marine archaeological and culturally significant sites
j. Visual impacts (e.g., to coastal communities, national parks and seashores, local seascapes)
k. Presence of seafloor telecommunications cables, disposal areas, unexploded ordinances
l. Oceanographic factors such as seafloor morphology, wind speed, water depth, shallow hazards, sea floor slope, currents, and tidal influence
m. Proximity of national seashores, marine sanctuaries, national marine monuments, wildlife refuges, or other exclusion areas to any future lease areas
    a. Data to support any recommended buffers or set-backs
n. State and local renewable energy goals, mandates, and preferences
o. Technical Design Parameters and Scope (i.e. anchor type, quantity and design)
    i. Cable types, transition points, substations
p. Other technical factors such as distance from shore, electricity demand, existing grid interconnections, etc.
q. Other uses of the OCS
    i. Alternative offshore energy (e.g., wave, tidal)
    ii. Aquaculture
    iii. Whale watching
    iv. Recreational vessel traffic