

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: Atlantic

Planning Area(s): North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic

Title: Socio-Economic Impact of OCS Wind Development on Fishing

BOEM Cost: \$730,000

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2014

Conducting Organization(s): National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Northeast Fisheries Science Center

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Description:

Background: The Atlantic OCS Region extends from the Canadian border to the tip of Florida. The diversity of fish resources is large and the manner of fishing varied. In New England and the northern mid-Atlantic, offshore banks and major inshore marshes and estuaries are important habitats and fishing areas. In the southern mid-Atlantic and eastern Florida, open water and reefs are important for fish resources and fishing. Fishing along the Atlantic seaboard supports direct and indirect food sales, industrial processing, and provides valuable recreational experiences. In 2008, commercial fishery landings in the Atlantic Region totaled approximately 1.4 billion pounds with a value of over \$1.43 billion. In 2008, over 1.58 million recreational anglers took 9.2 million fishing trips in New England alone with a value (fishing trip and durable equipment expenditures) of \$1.8 billion.

BOEM is pursuing leasing for renewable energy development from southern New England to southern Florida. Key challenges relative to Atlantic Region fisheries are to minimize space-use conflicts, estimate artificial reef effects, avoid habitat alteration, reduce noise from pile driving, and moderate effects from electromagnetic fields, if any. For the Atlantic Region, the most noteworthy gap related to fisheries is that regarding potential space-use conflicts for commercial fishing, especially for the mid-Atlantic. The concern relates to the potential economic loss to fisheries. In addition offshore wind facilities could be de facto protected areas due to the inability of commercial fishers to obtain insurance to fish in wind facilities and thus benefit recreational fisher or the fishery resource itself due to the exclusion.

This study focuses on fishing effects in particular, as opposed to space-use conflicts in general (social, cultural, other economic, etc.), which were examined under the 2012 study *Identification of OCS Renewable Energy Space-Use Conflicts and Analysis of Potential Mitigation Measures*.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to assess the potential socio-economic burdens or benefits to commercial fishing along the Atlantic coast. Offshore wind facility

assessments not only have to evaluate the impact to essential fish habitat and fishery resources themselves, but also evaluate potential displacement/fishing effort changes and economic impacts from site development.

Importance to BOEM: Concerns have surfaced on the potential impacts that OCS wind development may have on commercial and recreational fishing. These impacts are not currently well understood. Results of the study will be used in BOEM Atlantic Region environmental assessments.

Current Status: The study was awarded on August 27, 2012. The project has begun to share draft deliverables with the fishing industry (see Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting minutes from April 10, 2014).

Final Report Due: August 26, 2014

Publications: None.

Affiliated Web Sites: None.

Revised Date: April 15, 2014

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp