

## **BOEMRE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ONGOING STUDIES**

**Region:** Headquarters

**Planning Area:** North Atlantic and Mid Atlantic

**Title:** Surveying for Marine Birds in the Northwest Atlantic (NT-09-03)

**Total Cost:** \$808,200.00

**Period of Performance:** FY 2009-2011

**Conducting Organization:** US Fish and Wildlife

**BOEMRE Contact:** Elizabeth Burkhard

### **Description:**

Background: With the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BOEMRE was delegated responsibilities for alternative energy activities on the Outer Continental Shelf. This new responsibility includes offshore wind energy projects. Experience from onshore wind development suggests that the siting of facilities is critical to minimize impacts to bird species. Which species of birds are present in areas of Federal jurisdiction, greater than three nautical miles offshore, is not known.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the College of Staten Island/City University of New York (CSI/SUNY), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, and the FWS have been working in partnership to collect data on marine bird distribution and abundance in portions of the offshore environment in the Atlantic Ocean. Through the efforts of graduate students from CSI/SUNY, ecologists collected data on seabirds while aboard four research vessel cruises. Space for two seabird ecologists at a time is available through collaboration with NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service.

Objectives: The objectives are:

- 1) To identify what species are present/absent, and
- 2) To determine areas where they tend to congregate and areas where they are absent or scarce.

This study will collect information on what species are found where in what seasons, and where they tend to congregate. Additionally, verification of where such "clusters" are NOT found is important information. Distance from shore, water depth, and bottom type where clusters are found will be collected as well.

Methods: Conduct field observations for the presence/absence of birds offshore. Birds will be identified to species where possible. Trained observers with vision-enhancing equipment will conduct the observations from shipboard.

**Importance to BOEMRE:** The development of offshore alternative energy facilities has the potential to impact bird species. The data collected in this study is needed to help define the presence or absence of various bird species offshore. This information will be critical in decisions regarding placement of offshore facilities.

**Current Status:** The 2009 winter field season was successful and yielded useful information. The project was extended to include several more years of sampling to support the long-term database and analysis efforts.

**Final Report Due:** February, 2015

**Publications:**

**Affiliated WWW Sites:**

**Revised Date:** August 26, 2010

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