

**NJ Marine Fisheries Council  
Offshore Wind Committee  
May 4, 2022**

**Meeting Summary**

The Marine Fisheries Council's Offshore Wind Committee met by webinar on Wednesday, May 4, 2022. In attendance were 4 committee members, 8 advisors, and staff. Dr. Bochenek indicated that the present meeting will provide updates on recent state, BOEM, and developer activities, and requested a future meeting to review recent scientific publications and findings from other areas. Dr. Bochenek will work with staff in the coming weeks to identify topics of interest.

Staff provided updates on the two approved offshore wind development projects off southern New Jersey. Ocean Wind has had trouble getting necessary protected species permits for some of their survey work, so it is expected that the start of their trawl survey will be delayed. The company has announced the availability of Navigational Safety Fund which will provide funding for commercial and recreational for-hire vessel owners and operators for training and to upgrade their navigation systems. Draft Environmental Impact Statements for both Ocean Wind and Atlantic Shores are scheduled to be released later this year, with Ocean Wind expected in June and Atlantic Shores in late fall. There will be a 45-60-day comment period for each one. Committee members and advisors expressed concern about cable routes, especially with respect to the potential number of cables and their placement relative to sand borrow areas. Staff noted that BPU has contracted a firm to accept and review proposals on alternatives to "onshore" all the cables. Further, DEP staff in Coastal Engineering are responsible for providing information to developers to avoid or minimize impacts to sand borrow areas. The committee discussed the need to consider alternatives to trawl surveys if they can't get permitted. It was also discussed that many of the health and safety standards typically required by developers for their contracted surveys vessels might be loosened, which would provide opportunity for more commercial vessels to get involved.

Staff continued with updates on recent BOEM activities. The Call for Information and Nominations for the new Central Atlantic Area (Delaware Bay to Cape Hatteras) is open. The purpose of the Call is to assess commercial interest in, and obtain public comment on, potential wind leases in this area. Comments are due June 28 and will be used to better identify and prioritize areas appropriate for wind development. BOEM is expected to release a draft Fisheries Mitigation Plan, which includes avoidance and minimization of impacts, as well as compensation for impacts. BOEM will hold one east coast stakeholder meeting on May 18, 9:00-11:30, and states will lead their own stakeholder meetings to obtain comments on the plan. Because of the overlap in interest groups, DEP is considering holding joint meetings with

New York. Meeting dates will be distributed once they are set. Finally, staff reported back on BOEM's decision regarding requests for a buffer between turbines and artificial reefs. It was reported that BOEM's navigation expert saw no navigation or safety concerns that could not be addressed by following "rules of the road" and practicing situational awareness, and therefore would not require a buffer. There were questions on whether DEP could require it of the developers or BOEM, but the state does not have that authority. It was noted, however, that it might be possible for the state to negotiate the proposed locations for a small number of turbines with the developer, even if BOEM does not have a requirement. Dr. Bochenek suggested a letter from Marine Fisheries Council might be appropriate.

Staff provided updates on the DEP Offshore Wind website, highlighting how to sign up for updates or submit comments at any time. One advisor noted the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council includes correspondence on their offshore wind webpage and asked if we DEP did as well. Staff responded that certain correspondence was included, but not all. One new item on the website is an overview of the state's Research and Monitoring Initiative which funds research projects and other priorities regarding offshore wind. Staff provided an overview of how priority research topics were identified, as well as a list of projects that have been funded or are in consideration, such as EMF, benthic habitats, marine mammals, and socio-economic impacts on the recreational sector. Staff suggested it might be possible to get the project leaders to present their work to this committee, and there was general agreement that this would be useful.

Staff concluded by providing an overview of some opportunities open to the public for learning more about offshore wind, including NYSERDA's Learning from the Experts webinar series, and the upcoming State of the Science conference.

Following staff updates, committee members and advisors also provided updates to the group. One advisor gave an update on an Offshore Wind Developers conference held recently in Atlantic City. Mr. Kaelin notified the group that Equinor had released a Notice to Mariners about losing a piece of survey equipment which has created a new "hang" for mobile gears. Finally, one advisor who works closely with Atlantic Shores mentioned how the developer is interested in contributing to the state's artificial reef program.