MA Fisheries Working Group on Offshore Wind

September 23, 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm

MEETING SUMMARY

Lisa Engler opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Beth Card (on the phone) thanked Lisa and Dan McKiernan for convening the meeting. She also informed the group of the many events that EEA has been conducting around the Commonwealth to celebrate Climate Week.

Regional fisheries mitigation

Lisa Engler, CZM

Lisa Engler informed the FWG of recent discussions regarding regional fisheries mitigation guidance for potential impacts from offshore wind. This effort stems from a letter sent to the Biden administration by the nine coastal Atlantic state governors. In response, BOEM, other federal agencies, and state agencies began to consider how states can work together and leverage recent experiences. At this point, conversations are still in the preliminary stages seeking to identify common interests and needs across affected states, the role of federal agencies, a potential timeline, stakeholder engagement, public input, etc. The intent of this guidance is to provide a framework for offshore wind developers to assess economic exposure and compensatory mitigation on a project by project basis by following a publicly reviewed guidance, using the best available fisheries data and informed by stakeholder input. Input from the FWG on a potential framework will be solicited as the process moves along. RODA has been compiling information and soliciting input from their members on related topics as well.

A member expressed concern about the term "mitigation" often referring to a cause and effect relationship and subject to proof that damage has been done that needs to be mitigated. There is general concern about proving that a developer is responsible especially in the face of other causes such as climate change.

A participant added that in addition to mitigation, "prevention" of damage to fisheries should also be considered. Keeping the number of cable routes to a minimum to minimize impacts to benthic habitat should be a priority. Smaller projects (e.g., South Fork) could share cable routes with larger projects. It was suggested that offshore wind projects should be required to produce a minimum of 400 MW, preferably 800 MW.

In response to questions about who is representing the state and fishing industry in these negotiations, it was clarified that there are no ongoing negotiations. This effort is to better understand whether a framework can be developed to address future projects, based on lessons learned, and to ensure consistency and equity across states. Stakeholder input will be

an important part of the process. Meeting participants should direct any questions to Lisa Engler or Dan McKiernan.

Another participant indicated that fisheries stakeholders should be involved in these conversations from the start as these projects could potentially create hardship for fishermen, for consumers, and other stakeholders. It was pointed out that states have different processes on mitigation. For example, Rhode Island has laws outlining that fishing industry representatives must be included at the table for negotiations. It was noted that participants will be kept informed of any progress and that there will be numerous opportunities for participation and input by stakeholders.

Fishing industry updates

Beth Casoni (MLA) suggested that, if possible, developers collaborate to develop a streamlined gear loss claims process rather than have different processes for each developer. Joel Southall (Mayflower Wind) responded that the claims form on Mayflower Wind's website was developed in conjunction with the other developers and with feedback from fisheries representative. He confirmed that the fields in the form are the same and the information requested is consistent across the different projects.

Ed Barrett indicated that he was not aware of the opportunity for the fisheries industry to provide updates at these meetings. He requested that a week's heads up would be needed to give people time to get organized and provide an update. It was explained that this section of the agenda was introduced at the meeting in June 2021 in response to a request from member of the working group. There will be time on the agenda for industry update at future meetings. If anyone wishes to provide a longer update (2-5 mins) they should email Lisa and/or Dan ahead of the meeting so that a longer time period may be provided on the agenda.

Annie Hawkins (RODA): 1) RODA conducted a survey of impactees, talking to some states and meeting with MA industry representatives. Results will be in the form of recommendations rather than a comprehensive plan for impactees. It will show where the survey found consensus and will be informative to states, fisheries groups, and BOEM. A report will be available in about 2 weeks. 2) In August a broad fishing industry survey on research priorities was conducted at a regional scale. The report will be available in the next few weeks so agencies hear from the industry on priority topics and types of research questions.

Offshore Wind Developer Updates:

Vineyard Wind (Crista Banks)

Crista Banks provided an update of the status of the Vineyard Wind projects (see presentation). Crista described the latest geophysical surveys in Nantucket Sound along the cable corridor and ongoing communication with conch fishermen to avoid gear interaction. Ongoing biological surveys include video transects with ROV, multibeam sonar data and

grab samples in certain areas of the cable corridor and northern portion of the lease area. Surveys are ongoing September through mid-October. Geophysical surveys in the offshore lease area have scout vessels working in tandem with survey vessels to locate fixed gear and communicate about fisheries activities.

Crista indicated that Vineyard Wind is developing a phone app accessible to fishermen that will show offshore vessel activity. The app can be programmed to a fisherman's area of interest, so they can get vessel activity updates for a particular area of concern. It allows users to click on a vessel and get information regarding location and who it is working for. It also allows users to communicate where they are fishing. The app is being beta tested. Crista invited fishermen to reach out with concerns or questions about ongoing work.

In response to questions, Crista explained that the beta testing is using Vineyard Wind and fishing representatives to gather input. 6-7 fishermen have it downloaded on their phone. Crista invited those interested on beta testing with different phones to reach out.

Annie Hawkins indicated that RODA is developing a similar tool and will follow up offline with Crista. DMF is in communication with Vineyard Wind and will send out notices to fixed gear fishermen in the southern New England area as needed.

Equinor/Beacon Wind (Elizabeth Marchetti)

Elizabeth Marchetti presented the latest updates of the work by Beacon Wind (see presentation). Geophysical and geotechnical surveys commenced in August 2020 in the survey area and cable route and will continue through December 2021. Scout vessels for gear conflict mitigation support are accompanying the survey vessels. Samples include vibracores, sediment profiles, and benthic grabs. Export route surveys finished the previous Saturday. October work will focus on shallow areas of cable route. Throughout the survey work there has been excellent communication between survey vessels and scouting vessels with no gear conflict.

Mayflower (Joel Southhall)

Joel Southhall presented an update on the Mayflower Wind project (see presentation). In June, Mayflower Wind reached an agreement with Anbaric to bring offshore wind to Brayton Point in Somerset (See the website for recent announcement*)*. This export route option is in addition to the Falmouth cable route option. The cable route will be partially co-located with the Falmouth cable and then split off to connect at Brayton Point. A more specific survey schedule is available on the website and will be updated weekly. Studies are ongoing in Mount Hope Bay at the mouth of the Sakonnet River, and some are planned for 2022. Mariners will be alerted when surveys are scheduled to avoid gear conflicts.

Joel also mentioned the NEAq and INSPIRE research across the whole MA-RI wind energy area supported by MassCEC, BOEM and RIDEM. It includes catch and release, acoustic survey, and other focused to gather data on HMS. The research effort is jointly funded by developers. NEAq issued notice to mariners that the acoustice receivers will be active

through December 2021, when they will be retrieved and redeployed in spring 2022 when NEAq will issue another notice to mariners.

In response to questions by participants, Joel indicated that the floating wind demo project that is planned for the Mayflower Wind area is a pilot project hosted by Mayflower but proposed by Shell. More project details will be provided at the next meeting.

A participant expressed concern for the need of yet another cable and cable route. Joel explained that the second cable route is to accommodate the potential to generate up to 1600MW where Falmouth does not have the available capacity to receive the full amount.

Ørsted: South Fork (Chris Sarro)
Ørsted has been awarded <4000 MW capacity overall, including South Fork, Revolution Wind, and Sunrise Wind. For updates on permitting status see presentation. For Revolution Wind, fisheries surveys are upcoming including seasonal trawl survey. There will be two control sites to determine if construction and operation activities could impact fishery abundance. Chris also mentioned that Ørsted is partnering with NEAq and INSPIRE on a 5-year acoustic study looking at HMS (tune, mako, blue shark). A trap survey will be conducted to evaluate changes in abundance of lobster and Jonah crab and a before-after gradient survey during the operational phase to check for changes in abundance of horseshoe crabs near foundation locations and coordinate with DMF and RI along cable routes. Details of all surveys are available in the presentation.

A participant strongly recommended surveying (e.g. plankton tows) around spawning grounds at Cox's Ledge if it is not being done already.

Pilot Regional Fisheries Studies: Net Survey for Larval Lobster and Fish Neuston
Kevin Stokesbury, UMass Dartmouth - SMAST

Kevin Stokesbury provided an overview of one of the projects sponsored by BOEM, RIDEM and MassCEC (see presentation for details). The study used net tows to survey location for the four different life stages of lobster as well as fish and crab larvae at Cox's Ledge and within the offshore wind energy area (WEA). Studies were conducted in 2020 (starting June due to COVID) and in 2021 (starting May/June). Researchers also included plankton surveys (samples still being analyzed) to collect data relating to food availability and hotspots for NARW as well as studies of how the turbines may alter current movement, and thereby scallop larval dispersal in the WEA (using the FVCOM model). Preliminary findings that include tides in the model appear to predict that resulting gyres from the turbines may lower water temperature by disrupting stratification which may be beneficial for lobsters.

Suggestions for future work:

- Continue sampling of larval lobster, copepod and ichthyofauna community for the MA lease area and link with higher resolution surveys for each windfarm

- Expand modeling efforts to included larval lobster, copepod and ichthyofauna community with updated current information, turbine windfarm designs and lay-outs
- Extend efforts to surrounding areas

It was noted that salinity also plays a crucial role. Low salinity makes larvae sink to the bottom, resulting in high mortality. High salinity causes larvae to float to the surface where predator-prey interactions may result in high mortality as well. Kevin indicated that all four abiotic parameters (T, S, DO, pH) will continue to be monitored and the information used in conjunction with the biological surveys.

In response to a question about the forecasted high distribution of scallops within the WEA, Kevin responded that the first round of the FVCOM model indicated scallops to be settling around the edge of the WEA but results after adding tides have still to be analyzed. The disruption of the flow seems to result in more mixing, disrupting the stratification and lowering temperature.

Some concern was expressed about future impacts. Although these data provide baselines, there was concern about who will pay fishermen for expenses involved in changing methods to fish farther offshore if the turbines end up causing changes in the distribution and settling of larvae of target species.

Responsible Offshore Science Alliance Update

Mike Pol, ROSA

Mike is the research director at ROSA. ROSA is an intersection between developers, fishermen and other regulatory bodies and coordinates the science to help the permitting process. Improve cooperation and partnerships and increase the amount of data and info about the effects of wind energy. More information on ROSA's mission, goals and structure are provided in the presentation and their website. A communication survey indicated quarterly meetings is optimal (next is September 24). ROSA's work is guided by an advisory council. ROSA is currently compiling a list of science priorities for research based on input from the fishing industry and will be vetted by subject matter experts. A website is also in development to provide stakeholders with additional information on studies. Mike pointed out that maintaining engagement between ROSA and the FWG is important as this maintains communication with the fishing industry and utilizes the expertise of the FWG.

Other Announcements/Updates/Next Meeting

Lisa wrapped up the meeting by thanking attendees. The next meeting will be in December.

Action items:

- The results of the two RODA surveys will be shared at future meetings, when available.
- Representatives from Mayflower Wind and Shell will provide an update on the floating wind project at the next FWG meeting.
- Focused presentations from the industry developers on decommissioning plans for offshore wind projects will be provided at a future meeting.
- At the next meeting there will be a presentation of another regional pilot study (likely the work by INSPIRE to conduct tagging and other studies on HMS).

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 PM.