

Floating Offshore Wind Research Array

Summary of Fisheries Work Session #1

March 10, 2021

OVERVIEW

The Governor's Energy Office (GEO), in partnership with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), is holding a series of work sessions to inform the State's plans for an offshore wind research array and encourage engagement in the stakeholder process to inform the research lease application to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). The first fisheries work session focused on understanding what data is currently available to determine what fisheries and fishing activity are present in the research area of interest. The work session was open to all interested parties.

This summary focuses on the main points covered during the work session. The agenda, presentation slides and recording of the work session are available online:

<https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind/researcharray/worksessions>

ATTENDANCE

The work session was attended by approximately 100 people including the general public, non-government organizations, fishery associations, fishermen, consultants, academics and state and federal agencies. Please note that participating in these sessions does not constitute approval nor endorsement of OSW development in the GOM generally or the Research Array in particular.

DISCUSSION

Below is a summary of the key themes and topics discussed during the work session. [Many of these questions were answered during the meeting and/or can be found in our FAQs.](#)

Common Themes

Concerns about Siting

Members of the fishing industry continue to express strong concerns about siting of the research array, with concerns ranging from direct impacts to fishing and fisheries, impacts to coastal families, businesses, communities, heritage, and future generations, lack of detailed information on the technology.

Technology Questions

- Can these offshore platforms be used for additional co-beneficial activities like aquaculture or hydrogen production?
- How long will the moorings be, at what angle, and what distance from turbines will be inaccessible due to moorings or electrical cables in the water column. What will be the "off-limits" mooring zone around each turbine? And, how will these obstructions be marked?
- What is the average voltage going through the intra-array and transmission cables?
- What will the anchoring lines be made of and do different materials matter for entanglement, scraping or scarring and other impact risks?

Siting and Permitting Questions

- What kinds of permits does the array need to get. For instance, will it need to get an incidental take permit or incidental harassment assessment? *NOAA clarification: It would require incidental take authorization (MMPA) and ESA consultation during permitting, but not during this initial application.*
- Will fishermen be compensated for gear loss, loss of fishing days or grounds, and other matters? Could you set aside a portion of the revenues for a fishermen’s mitigation fund?
- It is going to be important to establish a baseline prior to construction and that should be at least 2 to 3 years.
- Still trying to understand why we are moving forward with a research array when the roadmap isn’t complete for the entire state.
- Some participants stated that the State should commit to a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project.

Siting Considerations

DMR presentation:

- Data is limited, but DMR is gathering it from the data portals, (<https://www.northeastoceandata.org/gulf-of-maine-floating-offshore-wind-research-array-area-of-interest/>), state information, and conversations with individuals or small groups.
- In general, the following areas have more potential for siting: further from shore; muddy bottom; less fishing activity. The number of lobstermen drops off extensively further offshore and at depths of 80 to 90 fathoms there tends to be less lobstering.
 - Some asked if the array could be sited beyond 40 miles. The State set an outer boundary of 40 statute miles from shore due to the economics a relatively small scale project (a project much beyond 40 miles would likely require a subsea substation, which is cost prohibitive for a project of this scale and would be another physical structure at sea). It was noted in that area “beyond” the blob there is good evidence for extensive ground fishing.
- The southwest area of the considered area (the “blob”) is less likely to be preferred because of the WGOM closure, shipping lanes, and the rich area for fisheries and marine mammals on Jeffrey’s Ledge.
- The area between Platts and Jeffreys though relative deep has a history of active ground fishing.
- There is less readily available recreation fishing data in the general area.
- The area around Mistaken Ground and further south and east is not as well mapped, but there is new data coming in this month to review and will help increase knowledge of that area.
- Shipping lanes and some of the traffic areas coming out of shipping lanes are less likely to be preferred for the research array and there are DOD closure areas that are highly likely off-limits.

Participant feedback/concerns:

- Platts Bank is also an area of extensive fishing and unlikely to be a preferred area for siting the array. It was noted that Platts and Toothaker Ridge were proposed as closure areas under the omnibus EFH amendment but didn’t make it into the final document.

- There is also interest in siting considerations for the transmission cable. For instance, one commenter noted that laying cable in mud might be more problematic than in sandy bottoms.
- A participant asked if one is limited to one contiguous configuration? Could you have two smaller instead of one bigger site? In this way, you could explore different anchoring systems, maybe different distances between turbines, and so on.
 - GEO responded that the site would need to be one contiguous lease, but it may be possible to explore multiple anchoring systems or different distances between turbines.

Research Questions

- Please include key socio-economic questions in the research program.
- Is there a research consideration to try to reduce the scope of the anchoring cables to minimize the fishing exclusions zones around each turbine? Can one try different cabling arrangements as part of research?