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## **Site Visit and Report FAQs**

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### **What are site visits?**

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is required to conduct a site visit for proposed standard and experimental lease sites. DMR also has the discretion to conduct site visits for proposed standard lease expansions. Statute and regulation specify the elements DMR is required to document during the site visit, including bottom composition, water depth, typical flora and fauna, relative abundance of commercial and recreational species, evidence of fishing activity, distances to shore, and navigation channels and moorings.

Site visits are scheduled by science staff at a time of year conducive to evaluate the proposed site and surrounding area in consideration of when the proposal was deemed complete. For example, staff may schedule the site visit around certain tidal stages, anticipated fishing activity in the area, or other considerations based on the nature of the proposal.

During the site visit, staff may SCUBA dive the proposed site or use a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to assess bottom characteristics or other considerations. Staff may utilize other specialized equipment, including transom mounted depth sounders. Staff may be conducting work both within and outside of the proposed lease boundaries.

### **Are applicants notified when their site visit is scheduled?**

No. However, applicants are sent a copy of the completed site report which details the findings of the site visit.

### **Can applicants or members of the public participate in the site visit?**

No. It is important that the site visit is conducted objectively, so applicants and members of the public are precluded from participating in the assessment of a site. There are also certain safety protocols and procedures that must be followed, and staff are focused on making sure all elements are recorded. Staff may invite other agency staff on a visit to provide additional assistance or expertise, but that is at the discretion of DMR.

### **What is the site report?**

The site report is a written document that details the findings and observations from the site visit. The site report is required prior to a decision being issued on any new lease site. In cases where hearings are required, the site report needs to be made available 30 days prior to the hearing. DMR sends a copy of the completed site report to the applicant and posts a copy to our website.

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**When will my site report be issued?**

Site visits typically occur from late spring through early fall. The timing can vary each year depending on weather, temperature, and other environmental factors. From late fall through early spring, staff prioritize writing site reports. Therefore, it may be several months between when the site visit occurs and the publication of the associated report. However, this system represents the most efficient use of resources as site assessments can only be conducted during certain times of year.

**Why aren't site visits conducted year-round?**

Site visits are conducted at a time of year that is appropriate to evaluate the proposed location. From late fall through early spring, many water-related activities are less frequent or not occurring (i.e. kayaking, recreational boating, certain commercial and recreational fisheries, etc.) and marine organisms, including vegetation, are much less active or dormant. Conducting site visits during this time of year is generally not adequate to evaluate the proposed location in consideration of applicable decision criteria.

**How is the site report utilized?**

It becomes part of the agency record and helps the Hearings Officer write a decision on the proposed lease site. In cases where hearings are required, the site report is entered as evidence.

**I disagree with the observations in the site report. What should I do?**

Please remember that site visits are an assessment of the proposed lease site and surrounding area at a specific point in time. Individuals are encouraged to participate in the leasing process to provide their feedback on the application and relevant decision criteria. The site report is one document that DMR may utilize to render a final decision on the proposal. However, relevant testimony, evidence, or other materials may also be used in evaluating an application.