Research Array Informational Webinar Meeting Summary

June 20, 2024

4:00-5:30pm

Welcome

David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute (CBI), welcomed everyone, introduced himself as the facilitator, and shared the Zoom guidelines.

Celina Cunningham, Governor's Energy Office (GEO), welcomed and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend. She shared the goal of the webinar is to share updates about the Research Array and its associated activities.

David Plumb then shared the <u>agenda</u> for the webinar and introduced Luke Feinberg from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

BOEM Presentation

Luke Feinberg, BOEM, presented a series of <u>slides</u> that summarized the research lease location and BOEM's process for reviewing the State's research lease application which notably revealed significant navigational conflict with the U.S. Coast Guard Port Access Route Study: Approaches to Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, which was initiated after the State submitted the lease application. This led to two modeling efforts with the Coast Guard and the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS). This additional analysis led to a lease area that aligns with the Alternative Ship Routing Scenario Charlie 1 and is larger than requested in order to account for additional site survey and deconfliction. Although the lease area is 15,000 acres, the final project size will be limited to the State's original request of 9,700 acres.

Luke then reviewed the lease stipulations that are similar in structure to commercial leases with a few key differences. Those key differences are around navigational safety, the Research Framework, reporting requirements every six months, and that the project is limited to 9,700 acres.

He shared that the overall goals of the research lease are to support the future production, transportation, or transmission of renewable energy per the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, and as the research is expected to benefit the public, there are no fees or payments associated with the research lease. The research lease is expected to continue to inform the commercial.

GEO Presentation

Stephanie Watson, GEO, presented <u>slides</u> starting with sharing Maine's clean energy goals and the crucial role that offshore wind, including the Research Array, plays in the State reducing its overreliance on fossil fuels, transitioning to beneficial electrification, and meeting energy needs with clean electricity.

Stephanie then reviewed the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative and the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap, which was an 18-month stakeholder driven process, and flagged that the Roadmap's

Fisheries Working Group and the Environment & Wildlife Working Group identified the need to conduct additional surveys to gather data to inform the development of offshore wind, which the Research Array will accomplish.

She shared the primary reasons to advance the Research Array which are to advance critical research, support Maine-based innovation and technology, continue to inform commercial scale development, utilize local, clean energy sources, and protect our environment, economy, and communities.

Stephanie introduced the State's primary partners on the Research Array as the University of Maine and Diamond Offshore Wind (DOW). She stated that DOW will lead the permitting, construction, and operations of the Research Array and that the State is responsible for the execution of the research lease.

Stephanie shared the State's siting process for the Research Array that began in late 2020 and resulted in a winnowing down of an Area of Interest, a Narrowed Area of Interest, and finally a proposed research lease. She noted that the State's proposed lease site is similar to other areas in the Narrowed Area of Interest but initially was chosen above other areas because there was more certainty around the bathymetry, and for partly this reason, BOEM is offering a larger lease area to collect more data. As BOEM went into detail about the application review process and the reason for the altered location, Stephanie recapped the process and then shared the core themes and subcategories that feed into the Research Framework that is outlined in the State's research lease application.

In complement to the research focused on the Research Array, the State is advancing offshore wind research through the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium which was created through legislation in 2021. The Consortium has a diverse Advisory Board with people representing commercial and recreational fisheries, scientists from public and private institutions, NGOs, offshore wind industry, and state agencies. The three currently funded projects are focused on (1) fisheries coexistence, (2) creating a baseline socioeconomic data inventory, and (3) mapping the seafloor in key areas of the Gulf of Maine, including around the research lease area.

DMR Presentation

Casey Yanos, Department of Marine Resources (DMR), presented a series of <u>slides</u> on the planned surveys for the Research Array. She emphasized that she is sharing plans as they exist today but that it is an iterative planning process and that they are subject to change. DMR's goal is to create a framework for understanding offshore wind's impacts to the whole ecosystem, and when possible, DMR will align with the developer's survey plans, work with fishing vessels, and work with partner organizations. She clarified that DMR's survey plans are additive to the permitting requirements that Diamond Offshore Wind will be subject to, and that these additional surveys were based on recommendations that came from the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap Fisheries Working Group. Casey noted that the surveys that will be conducted are similar to other surveys being conducted in the Gulf of Maine but that these will be done at a high intensity in a concentrated area. The surveys will be subject to the same permitting and consultation requirements as similar survey work is. Casey showed a graphic depicting the before-after-gradient design DMR will utilize for the surveys being conducted within and surrounding the lease area. This strata design is intended to understand any impacts and the geographic extent of any impacts. DMR's current plan is for surveys to extend up to nine miles away, but that distance can be adjusted as necessary.

The next slide shows a depiction of the biological surveys that are currently planned. The planned surveys are as follows:

- Boat-based visual wildlife survey that will be focused on marine mammals and to ground truth passive acoustic data. May include bird and bat surveys
- Seafloor habitat characterization and benthic sampling to compile images of bottom habitat of the entire area. Benthic grab sampling data will include water column profiles, average seafloor values for temperature, pH, chlorophyll, dissolved oxygen, and salinity among others
- Passive acoustic monitoring that will capture data on the presence of cetaceans, locating and tracking of baleen whales, and ambient noise levels
- Tracking of highly migratory species and large pelagics that will collect data on tracking movement patterns and stable isotope analysis to infer tropic interactions
- Active acoustic survey to collect data on pelagic fish schools, demersal fish biomass, invertebrate biomass, depth of the biological maximum and others
- Lobster trap survey to characterize the lobster population and size and abundance of large egg-bearers and oversized lobster
- Oceanographic surveys that will include continuous data collected by shore-based radar stations and underwater monitors
- Plankton and larval lobster survey to further evaluate the water column
- Bottom trawl survey to possibly ground truth active acoustic survey on species composition, biomass, stomach contents and others
- Ecosystem modeling that involves creating a framework for modeling connections between resources
- Participatory mapping and local historical knowledge interviews to gather information on how fishermen have used the Research Array area over times and how they relate to ocean spaces

Casey ended her presentation by saying that the above plans are for the areas around the Research Array and DMR is still planning what studies will be done around potential cable routes.

Q&A Summary

BOEM, GEO, and DMR received questions about the following topics with brief summaries of the responses:

• UMaine platform design and turbine technology- Stephanie, GEO, responded that the Research Array intends to utilize UMaine's platform design as it allows for use of a local construction workforce and concrete production with the associated economic benefits. Information regarding technology is included in the the Research Activities Plan (RAP), which BOEM will review.

- Process of identifying research lease location- BOEM used the best available information at the time and acknowledged that there are data gaps, which is a key reason why a larger lease area was offered to allow for further deconfliction. The project size will be the same size as originally requested by the State. The State is required to relinquish the remaining area after finalizing the RAP.
- Decommissioning requirements and financial assurance- BOEM confirmed that BOEM does not allow construction to commence unless there is financial assurance is in place, including decommissioning costs. Cheri Hunter, representing the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), explained that decommissioning activities include removing all structures and return the site to its previous conditions.
- Transmission/cabling routes/substation- Dave Cowan, DOW, confirmed that DOW will be going through the environmental review process with multiple state and federal agencies. As part of the environmental review process, DOW will conduct baseline surveys and then propose multiple cable routes to be screened for suitability. At this point, DOW will conduct public outreach and seek input to inform the routing. DOW confirmed that no substation is currently being planned for the Research Array.
- Timing of Research Array vs commercial leases- BOEM confirmed that the research lease has been offered to the State and to expect the lease to be finalized this summer. The commercial lease auction is scheduled to occur later this fall and then the timing of the commercial projects are driven by the developers' timelines. BOEM noted that the research lease has already informed the commercial process and helped build relationships. GEO added that the Research Array will advance best practices and available data for any subsequent projects.
- Data collected to date- DMR, confirmed that Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) monitors sediment and water quality issues. Further analysis will be conducted as part of the State's permitting process for cable routing. In terms of data collected already, DMR contributed a lot of site assessment data that led to the identification of the Narrowed Area of Interest as it was an area that uniformly avoided a majority of impacts to fishing.

Closing and Next Steps

Stephanie, GEO, shared a slide with contact information, encouraged people to sign up for the <u>offshore wind newsletter</u> to stay updated, and thanked everyone for their participation. The contact information is as follows:

GEO-

Stephanie Watson, stephanie.watson@maine.gov

DMR-

- Science Questions- Casey Yanos, <u>casey.yanos@maine.gov</u>
- Policy Questions- Erin Wilkinson, erin.wilkinson@maine.gov

BOEM-

Luke Feinberg, <u>lucas.feinberg@boem.gov</u>

Diamond Offshore Wind-

Chris Wissemann, <u>cwissemann@dowind.com</u>

Links Referenced

- Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap
- <u>Maine Offshore Wind Research Array webpage</u>
- Maine Offshore Wind Research Array siting process:
 - o <u>Siting webpage</u>
 - o Pre-applicating Siting and Stakeholder Summary, Dec. 2020 to July 2021
 - <u>Marine Resources Summary of Industry Engagement and Siting Information for</u> <u>Proposed Offshore Wind Research Array</u>