**MFC Offshore Wind Committee**

**Meeting Summary**

**June 27, 2023**



The Offshore Wind Committee met with advisors to hear updates from developers on several projects off the New Jersey coast on June 27. Representatives were present from Orsted’s Ocean Wind 1 project and several developers from the New York Bight lease area.

Orsted provided an overview of the Ocean Wind 1 project off Ocean City. They are expecting the final approval (the record of decision) by early July. Several changes were made to their proposal based on results of the Environmental Impact Statement. Changes include the cable route through Barnegat Bay to avoid SAV impacts and a set back between the Atlantic Shores project to improve vessel transit. Mitigation measures include compensation to commercial, for-hire vessels, and shoreside businesses; a navigation and safety training program; cable routes that avoid prime fishing areas, and relocation of boulders encountered during trenching.

There were several concerns raised about in-water construction occurring over the summer and fall during the height of fishing and tourist season. Orsted staff responded that timing was constrained to times of year that would have the least impact to federally managed species (ex right whale). One committee member commented about the concern of noise impacting the spawning of black sea bass in early summer since NMFS Sandy Hook Lab study showed that noise may impact black sea bass. Orsted responded that noise mitigation measures will be implemented.

One committee member commented that it would be difficult to identify impacts with only one year of data. Orsted responded that although the trawl survey will be limited to one year due to permitting delays, most of their survey programs will have multiple years of data.

One committee member requested more information on the navigation and safety program. This program will allow eligible vessel owners to have access to upgrades to radar and AIS systems and will begin about one month prior to construction.

There was a request for more information on the Barnegat Bay shellfish survey. This survey will target hard clams using a Before-After-Control design with two years of data before and after construction. The survey will use the same vessel and gear as the DEP hard clam survey for consistency. It was recommended that the survey also evaluate oyster populations that may be impacted.

Following the discussion with Orsted, the Committee received an overview of several projects from the New York Bight region. Developers included Empire Wind, Bluepoint Wind, Attentive Energy, Community Offshore Wind, Atlantic Shores, Leading Light, and Vineyard Mid Atlantic (see attached map). These developers have been working collaboratively to streamline survey work and communication, including engaging with industry at multiple levels. Each developer provided a brief overview of their project. This was followed by an overview of their collaborative efforts. The goal of the collaboration is to streamline coordination among developers, communication with stakeholders, and transparency of offshore wind development in the NY Bight region. Examples of some of their initiatives to achieve these include a joint newsletter with updates, regular attendance at state and regional Council meetings, and evaluating new methods for improving stakeholder input, such as a panel of recreational advisors instead of individual advisors for each project. The group is also developing an app for stakeholders to be able to view information from all projects in a central location. They expressed a desire to work collaboratively on fisheries monitoring plans and are hoping to streamline health and safety protocols to facilitate using industry vessels during development and operation.

One advisor asked how the mitigation fund is calculated and what amount of damage is expected to fisheries. One developer responded that the mitigation process is being developed by the states following guidelines developed by BOEM. The next step will be to acquire a single fund administrator to administer a claims-based process regionally. Another developer noted that currently the process can be different among states and even among projects, but that all parties are learning a lot and the process is evolving.

One advisor commented that it was good to see shoreside businesses being included for compensation consideration. He supported the idea of using a panel of recreational fishermen and recommended that the shoreside sector be included there, as well. He noted that there was a lot happening very quickly and they BOEM and the developers need expert advice from across the fisheries sector.

One advisor asked if any of the developers had considered horizontal wind turbines, but this was an engineering question that none of the fisheries representatives could respond to. He also asked whether any of the developers had experience with projects as large as those being proposed. His concern is that if a project goes under, any compensation and mitigation requirements would be lost. Several developers commented that their companies had relevant experience.

There was some debate between developers and the committee and advisors on how large the impacts to tourism would be. One of the developers commented that European countries with wind farms had not seen any impact to tourism. One of the advisors commented that a recent study in Cape May County determined there would be non-negligible impact and agreed to forward the reference following the meeting.

The meeting ended with a final question from an advisor asking what decision points developers still need information on that stakeholders can provide input that could result in change and improvements. Staff offered to forward the request to the developers to allow them time to consider the request and respond as appropriate.

