Northeast Fisheries Science Center Engagement

Fisheries & Wildlife Surveys

Offshore wind development will impact NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) long-term scientific surveys as well as NOAA trust resources. Given the critical role of NMFS scientific surveys in the conservation and management of our ocean resources, there is a need to mitigate the impacts of wind development on NMFS scientific surveys. There is also a need to accurately assess the impact of wind development on NOAA trust resources. Both of these efforts require the design and implementation of appropriate methods and coordination among developers and with NMFS.

Federal Survey Mitigation Activities:

Offshore wind energy development will have impacts on NMFS long-term scientific surveys and assessments, which will not be able to continue to operate inside of wind farms using current methods and equipment. This will reduce the accuracy and precision of the biological indices derived from these surveys, which are essential for informing fisheries management decisions and ecosystem-level assessments, and impact the data critical for conservation and recovery of protected species. Thus, it is necessary to develop sampling methodologies that are standardized within and across wind farms and that are calibrated with long-term surveys conducted outside of the wind farms. For offshore wind development between Maine to Virginia, this work should be coordinated with NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). NEFSC scientific staff can provide technical assistance and advice, as appropriate, on measures that can be employed to design and execute sampling programs that meet regional survey standards and requirements. Survey plans should follow the survey mitigation recommendations and input provided by NMFS.

Monitoring for Impacts to Resources:

Fish and wildlife species, marine habitats, and the marine ecosystem itself may be affected by the impact producing factors (e.g., heat, EMF, sound, habitat modification, and wind wake effects) caused by offshore wind development. Biological effects derived from wind development may have important implications for populations of federally managed and protected species, and these effects may extend beyond the boundary of the wind farm. There is a need to characterize these effects and to understand what their magnitude and spatial extents are, and to be able to distinguish wind farm impacts from other sources of variability. In order to achieve this, appropriate and scientifically valid methods are needed that are standardized within and among lease areas and that are compatible with long-term scientific surveys in the region. Standardized regional survey designs and methods should be followed, such as described for the NEFSC federal multi-
Methods should be developed and employed in a coordinated fashion among wind developers so that data collected within and around wind farms in the same region can be compared even when collected by different developers.

Data Requests

NMFS understands the need to provide enhanced fisheries and wildlife data stewardship services that can improve access, understanding, and accessibility of important Science Center fisheries data but it is limited by resource constraints at this time. Requests for NOAA NEFSC Data should follow standard procedures for identifying and accessing NMFS data and metadata. NEFSC scientific data holdings, descriptions, and accessibility can be found at NMFS InPort Website (https://inport.nmfs.noaa.gov/inport/) which serves as NMFS enterprise data management program.

For further information regarding coordination with the NEFSC, contact: Andy Lipsky, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, andrew.lipsky@noaa.gov

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