



Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council

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MEETING SUMMARY

August 30, 2018

Chairperson: *B. Ballou (DEM)*

RIMFC members present: *D. Monti, J. Grant, A. Dangelo, T. Barao, C. Rein, J. Jarvis*

Division: *J. McNamee, S. Olszewski, J. Livermore, J. Lake, P. Duhamel*

Public: Approximately 7-8 persons in attendance

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1. **Approval of the Agenda:** The Chair, B. Ballou, noted that the meeting is meant to be informational only, with no formal recommendations votes or recommendations being sought at this time. He then inquired as to any modifications to the agenda or objections to adopting the agenda as modified; hearing none, the agenda was approved by consent.
2. **Presentation from Deepwater Wind regarding federal offshore wind development:** Eileen Kenny, Senior VP of Development, and John O'Keefe, Manager of Operations and Maintenance and Marine Affairs, were present from Deepwater Wind, with Mr. O'Keefe providing a powerpoint presentation. Following the presentation, the floor was opened to questions and comments from the Council and the public.
 - B. Ballou inquired as to the number of turbines proposed for the Southfork project; Mr. O'Keefe replied that although the exact number has yet to be finalized, it is anticipated that the South Fork project will include 15 turbines, and the Revolution project will include about 50 turbines.
 - A. Dangelo stated that he has been involved in the rod and reel research survey for the Southfork project, and that the area is very good for cod fishing. He expressed concern that his involvement was during the winter, when the fish weren't there. He asked if the survey would be continued throughout the year, given that the fishing is known to be better in the fall and spring. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the survey he participated in is a cod spawning survey; it is a constant-level survey, and not meant

- to be part of the more comprehensive surveys that will be conducted for the 2-year pre-construction phase. Mr. O’Keefe stated that Mr. D’Angelo’s recommendation -- for year-round rod and reel surveys -- is the kind of input needed to help determine the collaborative research needed beginning in 2019.
- D. Monti stated that the RI Party and Charter Boat Assoc. and the RI Saltwater Anglers Assoc. also have concerns about the rod and reel surveys, in that more surveys should be conducted. He asked how these groups could participate in developing the research plan and the types of surveys needed. Mr. O’Keefe stated that he could set up meetings to determine what type of information is needed, and that the process of determining the details of the research plan is beginning now, so there is time to provide such input.
 - J. Jarvis stated that he is aware of concern from fishermen due to the newness of offshore wind in this area, and that there hasn’t been a lot of time for environmental impacts studies. He is concerned about what happens to invertebrates, squid and other forage species from the turbine vibrations, as many fishermen’s livelihood rely on this area. Mr. O’Keefe stated that he is very sensitive to such matters. He offered that the Block Island windfarm has provided a great deal of information about impacts. He said it is difficult to use data from European windfarms due to variability of sites and age of technology used with older windfarms common in Europe. He stated that newer turbines will have more megawatts, use longer blades, and have greater distances between turbines, and that shorter distances between turbines is known to be a problem.
 - J. Grant asked about the life expectancy of the turbines, and their fate operations were to cease in the future. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the foundations are expected to last 50 years, the turbines 20-25 years. He also stated that a bond would be in place to cover the costs of decommissioning.
 - M. Rice asked about the lessons learned from the BI windfarm, namely, if there is any evidence of impacts. Mr. O’Keefe replied that there have been no negative impacts to date, based on 6 years of study.
 - D. Monti asked about cumulative impacts from several windfarms together; and if studies would be developed to look at cumulative impacts as each new project begins operations. He emphasized that lessons should be learned along the way. Mr. O’Keefe stated that several studies are occurring, and that they are being conducted by many other entities besides DWW. Ms. Kenny offered that the RODEO program provided real time observations during construction, looking a variety of things including visual and acoustic impacts, scour testing, and sediment modelling. She stated that there is a great deal of information and data publicly available.
 - D. Fox, Town Dock asked about the release date for the COP for the project. Mr. O’Keefe said that it is expected to be released for 30-day public comment in late September/early October 2018.
 - J. McNamee referenced the regional science collaboration initiative that is aimed at coordinating scientific work on multiple projects throughout the region, and asked whether DWW plans to use the same monitoring designs as used for the BI project, or is DWW open to new ideas? He also asked whether state agencies would have an opportunity to review the scientific designs of any new studies that would be occurring in the wind energy areas, as was provided for the BI project. Mr. O’Keefe

responded that the designs of the scientific studies will build upon those utilized for the BI project, but will be tailored to meet new needs and priorities; the study designs will be vetted both publicly and through existing connections with state agencies as this approach proved successful during the Block Island project.

- A. MacKown, Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, asked whether the technology will affect the size of the transmission cables. Mr. O’Keefe responded that the size of the cable will not be affected by the turbine technology.
- B. Ballou sought confirmation that the proposed layout for the South Fork project is a N-S/E-W square grid, with 1-mile spacing. Mr. O’Keefe replied in the affirmative, and that the layout is based on input from fishermen based on ability to navigate and fish between turbines.
- J. Grant asked about fishing prohibitions in the lease area, to which Mr. O’Keefe replied that there are none, and that DWW has no authority to place restrictions.

3. **Presentation from Vineyard Wind regarding federal offshore wind development:**

Christa Banks, Fisheries Liaison, was present from Vineyard Wind, joined by Erich Stephens. Ms. Banks provided a powerpoint presentation. Following the presentation, the floor was opened to questions and comments from the Council and the public.

- B. Ballou asked staff from CRMC to brief the Council on the status of the federal consistency determinations for both projects. J. Boyd from CRMC offered the following with respect to Vineyard Wind: application filed in April 2018, triggering 180-day window for review and determination; additional 2 months granted; thus, deadline is now December 6, 2018; hearing scheduled for November 27. The application was not required, because the project proposal is outside the OSAMP Area; VW submitted voluntarily. With regard to DWW: the COP was just filed; because the project is within the OSAMP Area, a federal consistency determination is required; the application for that is expected to be filed this fall, triggering a 180-day review period, during which a public hearing will be held.
- D. Monti expressed concern that the proposed spacing between the turbines is not even. Ms. Banks acknowledged the desirability of even spacing and a squared grid pattern, at least for some ocean users such as fishermen; but also noted that the area is subject to heavy vessel traffic, e.g., by scallopers, to/from port and their offshore fishing grounds, so accommodating their interest’s conflicts with the interests of others.
- D. Monti also asked about the status of the research plan. Ms. Banks responded that the plan is currently being formulated via SMAST-hosted workshops. The goal is to establish and adopt regionally consistent research protocols. She also noted that BOEM has a number of ongoing research projects, including some that are assessing EMF effects. D. Monti expressed concern that he saw no input from recreational fishermen in developing the research plan or a specific protocol regarding what studies are needed; and that an industry standard regarding types of studies needed is necessary for all windfarm development proposals. E. Stephens from VW noted that the workshops are aimed at starting the planning process and that input from recreational fishermen will be part of the process. he also noted that a video trawl survey is being currently underway.

- J. Grant expressed concern that the E-W pattern, which is essential to enable traditional fishing activities (namely, trawling) to continue in the area, is not yet firmly decided. E. Stephens offered assurance that the matter is being addressed, i.e., that Vineyard Wind is actively pursuing this configuration.
- M. Rice emphasized the importance of assessing cumulative effects through a robust protocol. In response, it was noted that regional studies will facilitate cumulative impact analyses.
- D. Fox expressed concern that the proposed layout will eliminate commercial fishing in the area; that a grid pattern is essential. He stated that federal regulations require full removal of all wind farm components upon decommissioning, but this commitment is not adequately set forth in the Vineyard Wind COP. In response, it was noted that sufficient funds will be provided via bond to cover full removal costs, however, it won't be clear, until decommissioning, whether it would be more environmentally sound to leave some components (e.g., cables) in place; the goal is, and will be, to minimize environmental impacts upon decommissioning. Mr. Fox expressed concern that components left behind at decommissioning will make the area unusable for fishing.
- A. MacKown noted that while there is no industry standard regarding turbine spacing, now is the time to establish such a standard. A grid pattern is essential to safe navigation. She suggested use of AIS transiting data to inform the process. Response was that a grid pattern has been proposed, which is based on transiting data, but that the resulting configuration does not align with other fishing-related needs.
- D. Fox stated that fishing in an E-W direction has been a fishing industry for years, but that the wind farms don't seem to understand this.
- D. Monti offered that the BI wind farm development has been very favorable for recreational fishing interests. Moreover, further renewable energy development will assist in reducing impacts of climate change.

Next Steps: B. Ballou asked if the Council wished to further consider the issues raised during the presentations, and potentially formulate recommendations to the CRMC and/or DEM, at a subsequent meeting. The Council unanimously supported moving forward in that way.

Meeting adjournment: Upon conclusion of deliberating all agenda items, *B. Ballou* inquired as to any objection to adjourning the meeting; hearing none, the meeting was adjourned by consent at approximately 8:15pm.