

# Habitat Committee Report

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**NEFMC Meeting  
October 1, 2020  
Via Webinar**



# Habitat policies work priority

- Purpose is to understand activities and approaches to mitigate effects, so we can comment effectively
  - Topics: Aquaculture and Submarine Cables / Pipelines
- Identify literature, reports, BMPs; draft and review background documents
  - Cables – *Close to having a complete first draft*
  - Aquaculture – *Final adjustments/edits*
- Draft policies w/NEFMC-specific BMPs – *Ongoing*
- Committee/AP review of draft policies – *November*
- Council review (and approval?) of draft policies – *December*



# Offshore renewable energy policy – possible updates

- Objective is to review recent literature and information (since ~2016) and determine if updates to our policy are warranted
- Plan to make use of literature review and synthesis initiatives currently underway
  - Synthesis of the Science (RODA/BOEM/NOAA) – October 2020 workshop, white paper early next year
  - State of the Science Workshop (NYSERDA) – November 2020 workshop
  - Oceanography series publication on fisheries/OSW – December/January
  - ICES Working Group – January/February – operational impacts, social science
  - Literature review (Department of Energy) – Occurring during 2021
- Will consider our policy in the context of these reviews and workshops, which collectively cover environmental and fisheries effects of OSW

# Offshore wind updates

- Committee/AP learned about EFH consultation and NMFS' [habitat mapping recommendations](#) during August 20 meeting; ongoing updates to recommendations are planned
- First meeting of Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) Council on September 28
  - Updated website just launched: <https://www.rosascience.org/>
- NOAA/BOEM Interagency Agreement on survey impacts
- The Coast Guard is conducting Port Access Route Studies for NJ/Delaware Bay (MAFMC [commented](#)) and Northern NY Bight (submitted [joint comments](#))

# Offshore wind project updates from NMFS

- Vineyard Wind 1
  - Anticipating a cooperating agency review of the FEIS at the end of September
  - FEIS is expected in November and the ROD in December
- South Fork
  - Expect a cooperating agency review of the DEIS to begin in October
  - DEIS is expected to be published in January
- BOEM currently has 10 COPs under review (including VW<sub>1</sub> and SFWF)
  - Do not know when BOEM will begin issuing Notice of Intents for other projects, but we expect Skipjack and Ocean Wind may be some of the first ones issued as we have already had interagency kick off meetings for these projects.

# Aquaculture spatial planning and governance

- On August 20, NOAA [announced](#) initial regions where Aquaculture Opportunity Areas are being developed – Southern California, Gulf Coast
  - General request to engage with all RFMCs on aquaculture siting
  - Forthcoming request for information and comment period
  - Using NOAA NCCOS siting tools to identify space use conflicts and optimal environmental conditions
- NOAA's AOA/spatial planning process can move forward despite 5<sup>th</sup> circuit court of appeals decision on Gulf Aquaculture FMP

# EFH consultations

- Recently NEFMC and MAFMC contacted various federal agencies to remind them of Councils' role in EFH designation and interest in consultation process
- Two current projects of interest
  - Google's Grace Hopper fiber optic telecommunications cable from Smith Point, NY to Bude, UK and Bilbao, Spain
  - Manna Fish Farms, approximately 10 miles south/southeast of Shinnecock Inlet, NY; interested in steelhead and black sea bass
  - These are in the pre-consultation phase; staff will track in partnership with NMFS Habitat Conservation staff



# Other ongoing work

- Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (as of July, started year 2 of 3), including integration of Habitat Climate Vulnerability Assessment
- Participation in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary management plan update process
  - Member of strategy development work groups related to research/monitoring and interagency coordination
- Northeast Regional Ocean Council
  - Best Management Practices workgroup
  - Offshore Wind data sharing/data platforms initiative – kickoff October 2
- ASMFC Habitat Committee – forthcoming products
  - Acoustic impacts on fishery species Habitat Management Series
  - Habitat Hotline on habitat monitoring and modeling initiatives



# Thank you!

Questions? Comments?