

Habitat Committee Report

**Michelle Bachman,
NEFMC staff**

**NEFMC Meeting
January 28, 2021
Via Webinar**



Outline for today's report

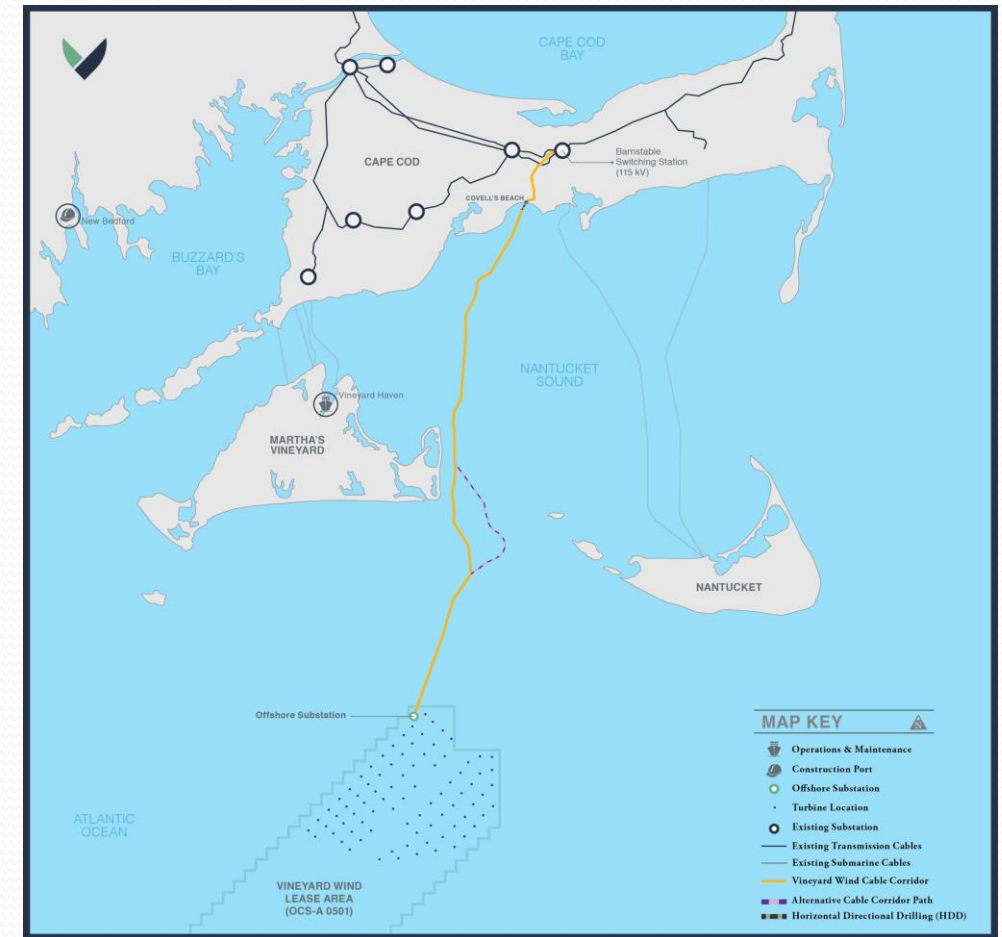
- Offshore wind
 - Project status and other items of interest
 - Potential comments on South Fork DEIS * **Action Item** *
- Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment
- Aquaculture projects and planning
- Other 2021 habitat priorities



Image: NOAA Fisheries

Vineyard Wind I

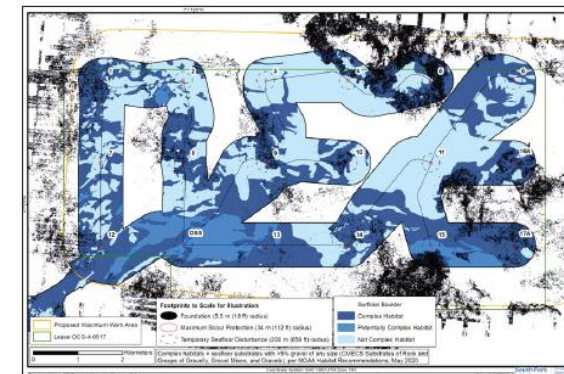
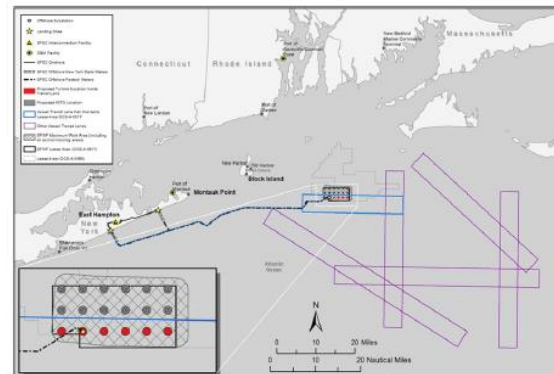
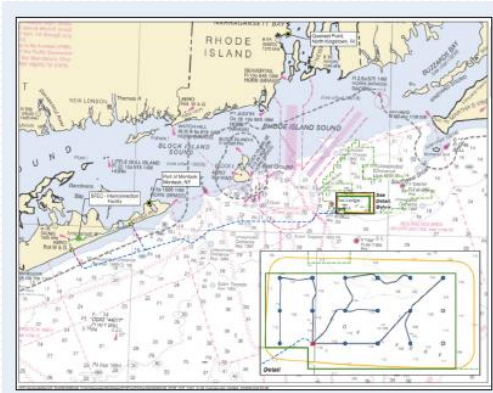
- Decided to use the larger GE Haliade X turbine, therefore withdrew their COP last month ([press release](#))
- Evaluated COP to see if new turbine fits within the current project design envelope; on 1/25 requested that BOEM restart permitting process ([press release](#))
- Survey work is ongoing; next fisheries trawl survey in February, geophysical surveys ongoing as well



Map: Vineyard Wind

South Fork

- DEIS [notice of availability](#) January 8; **comments due February 22**
- DEIS, COP & Appendices available via the [virtual meeting page](#)
- Info meetings/comment opportunity February 9, 11, and 16 via webinar
- Four alternatives
 - No Action, Proposed Action, Transit alternative, Habitat alternative

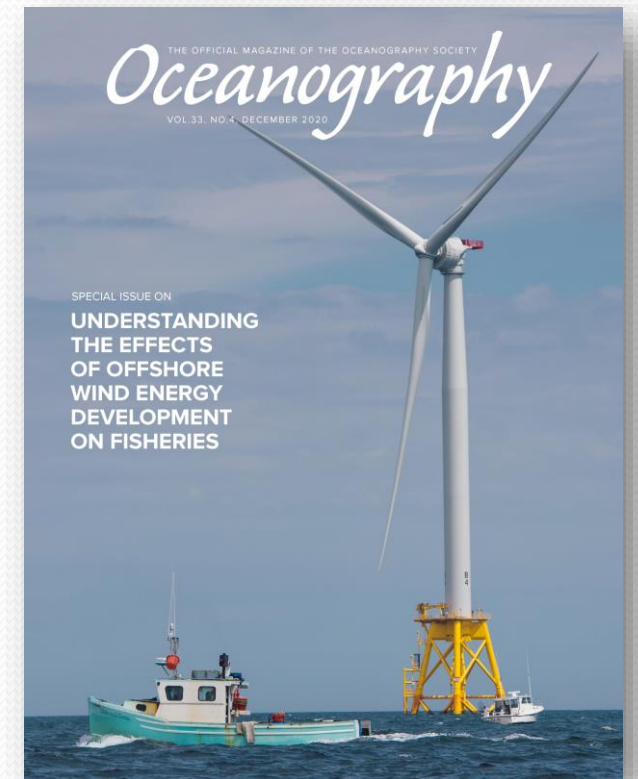


Gulf of Maine Floating Research Array

- 12 or fewer turbines, 16 mi² or smaller, 20-40 miles offshore, 150 ft or deeper, gravel or mud bottom (Maine is not planning wind facilities in state waters)
- State of Maine (GEO, DMR, others) partnering with New England Aqua Ventus and University of Maine
- Currently planning outreach to fishing industry (and others) and developing a research framework (DMR coordinating; NOAA, NEFMC involved in planning)
 - [Planning Webinar](#) – February 5, 12:30-5:00
 - [Fishing industry survey](#) – contact Carl Wilson with questions
- Links: [General information](#); [Web-based mapping tool](#)

Additional offshore wind highlights

- The journal *Oceanography* released a special issue in December on effects of OSW on fisheries ([link](#))
- NROC is hosting a webinar series on transmission (1/29, 2/5, 2/12, [link](#))
- DOE [funding opportunity](#); concept papers due March 1
- ROSA seeking a [Director of Research](#); next Advisory Council meeting will be March 5. Research Advisor appointments and Research and Monitoring Guidance should be announced/available next month.
- [ICES workshop](#) on socio-economic implications planned for March



Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment

- Teams met jointly Dec 2020; 18 months remaining on project (July 2022)
- Upcoming presentation – Tori Kentner and Chris Haak – *Use of joint and single species distribution models for NHRA* – Feb 25, noon-1 p.m. ([registration link](#))
- Work groups are currently digging into modeling issues and useful ways to report inshore habitat status and trends
- Will continue to connect with Council via habitat committee as we have products to share and are seeking feedback

Aquaculture projects and planning

- Council sent three comment letters last month - two projects in pre-application phase, plus NOAA Fisheries request for information on aquaculture opportunity areas
- Common theme is the need to consider potential fish and fishery interactions early in the process and using variety of data sources
 - GARFO is working on best ways to do this and has been communicating with us
 - Challenge of mismatch in spatial scale of projects in relation to scale at which fishery dependent data are collected
- Will continue to discuss concrete ways to collaborate and provide input (staff to staff, with Council) before and during March 9 habitat meeting

Other habitat priorities and staff activities

- Northern Edge – initial staff discussion/brainstorming ongoing; PDT meeting likely late February, initial discussion with Committee/Advisors in March; Council update planned for April
- Stellwagen Bank NMS is working on updated management plan; staff involved in revisions to vision/mission and developing action plans for research and interagency collaboration
- ASMFC Habitat Committee – forthcoming products include fish habitat of concern designations, acoustics habitat management series
- NROC's [Regional Habitat Mapping Pilot Study](#)

