

Habitat Report

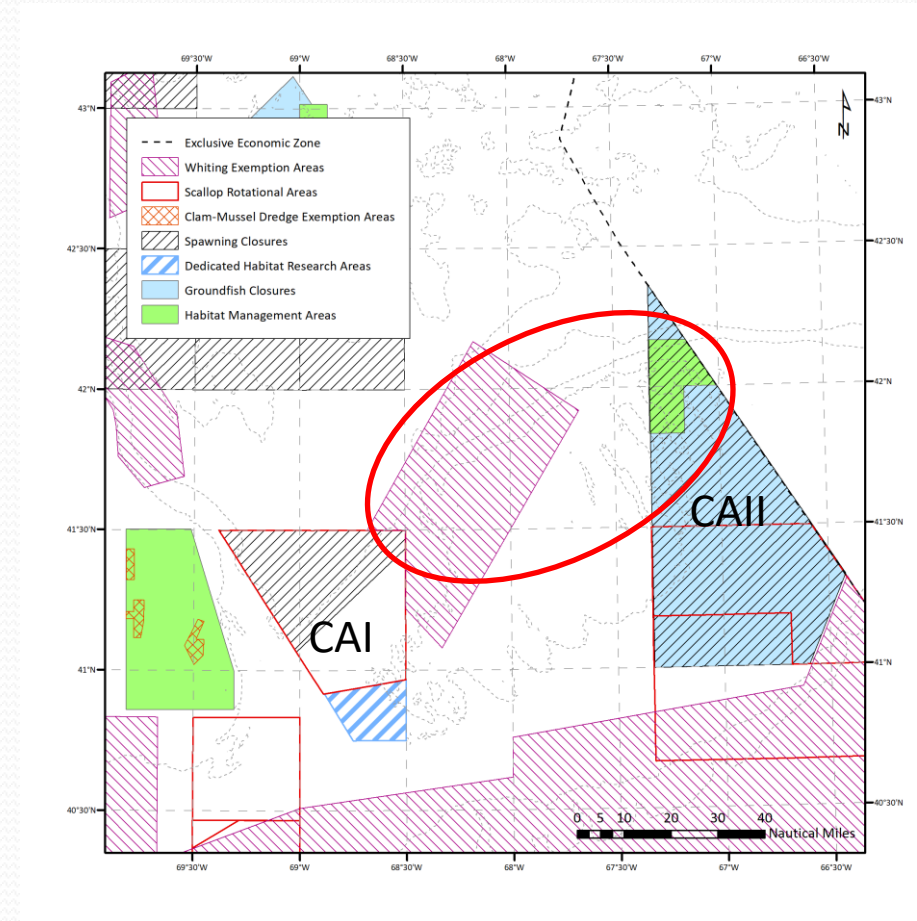
**Michelle Bachman,
NEFMC staff**

**NEFMC
June 22, 2021
Via Webinar**



Northern Edge Management

- Priority: “Assess the possibility of and, if possible, develop an action to revise Habitat Management Areas on Northern Edge of Georges Bank”
- Phase 1 – Assess possibility
 - PDT developing white paper to explore information and issues pertinent to habitat management on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank.
 - Intended to support a Council decision about whether to initiate an action that would consider revisions to habitat measures, specifically management areas and gear restrictions.
- Phase 2 (if required) – Develop action



Northern Edge white paper

- Focus on framing issue, new information in context of prior work. Outline:
 - Introduction – summary of spatial management, scope of evaluation, related documents
 - Habitat description – oceanography, benthic habitats, functional value, climate vulnerability, EFH and HAPCs, effects of fishing gear
 - Example of new information: Before-After-Control-Impact scallop dredge study
 - FMP-specific considerations
 - Management advice
- Working to complete the document over the next few months
- Will start a dialog with Committee about potential problem statement for action, to ensure that information provided supports decision making
- **No Council action required today**

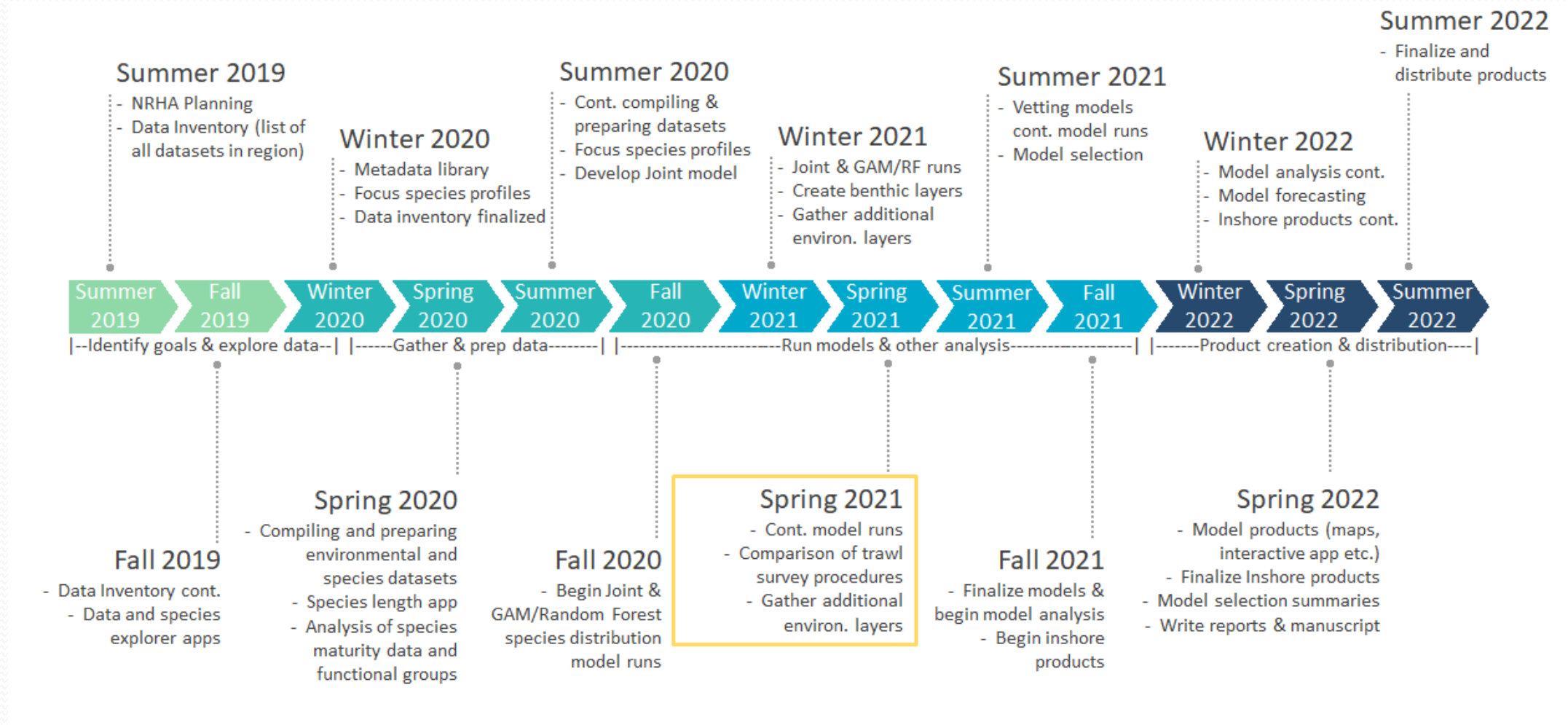
Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs)

- Regional atlases for Regions 1 and 2 (Gulf of Mexico and Southern California) coming soon
- Regions 3 and 4 will be announced late fall/early winter
 - Considering scoping comments from December 2020 when deciding on future regions (mixed but primarily in opposition in Northeast)
- See [presentation](#) from March 9 Habitat Committee/AP meeting for more information on AOA process and scoping
- **No Council action required today; stay tuned for updates later in the year**

Blue Water Fisheries

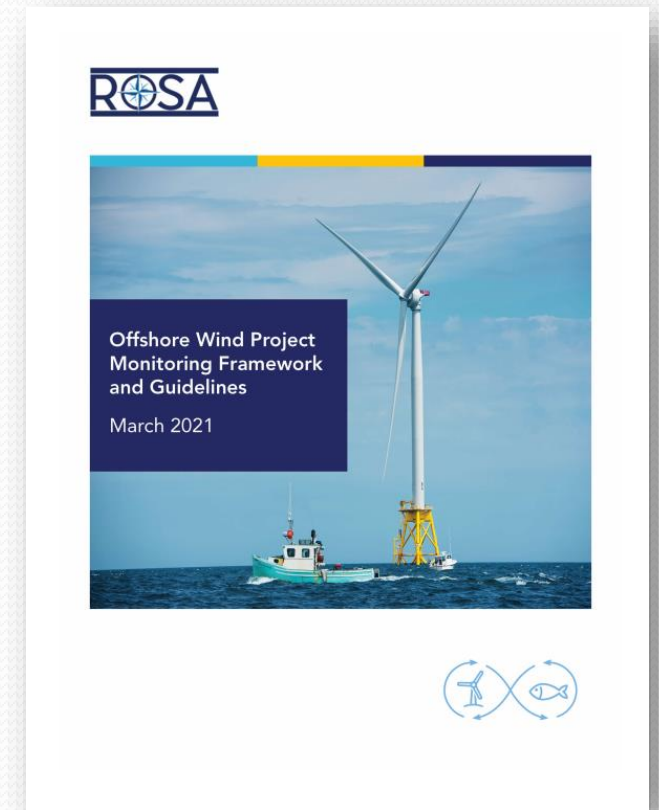
- Project will require both U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit (structures) and Environmental Protection Agency permit (discharge)
- Project will also require NEPA analysis
 - If EIS (decision pending, but appears likely) and two or more agencies are involved (yes, see above) NOAA will be the lead agency on EIS development
- USACOE comment period open through July 8 ([notice](#)). Suggested comments:
 - Refer them to our aquaculture policy
 - Recommend developing an EIS for the project
 - Recommend robust scoping and opportunities for stakeholder input
- Note that there will be multiple additional comment periods
- **Council action: recommend whether to submit comments to USACOE**

Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment



Responsible Offshore Science Alliance

- Advisory Council meeting on June 17. [Agenda](#):
 - Regional fisheries research approach/framework
 - Standardization of fishing gear surveys
 - Incorporating fishermen's ecological knowledge
- Mike Pol is their new Research Director
- Recently published: [Offshore Wind Project Monitoring Framework and Guidelines](#)
- No Council action required today

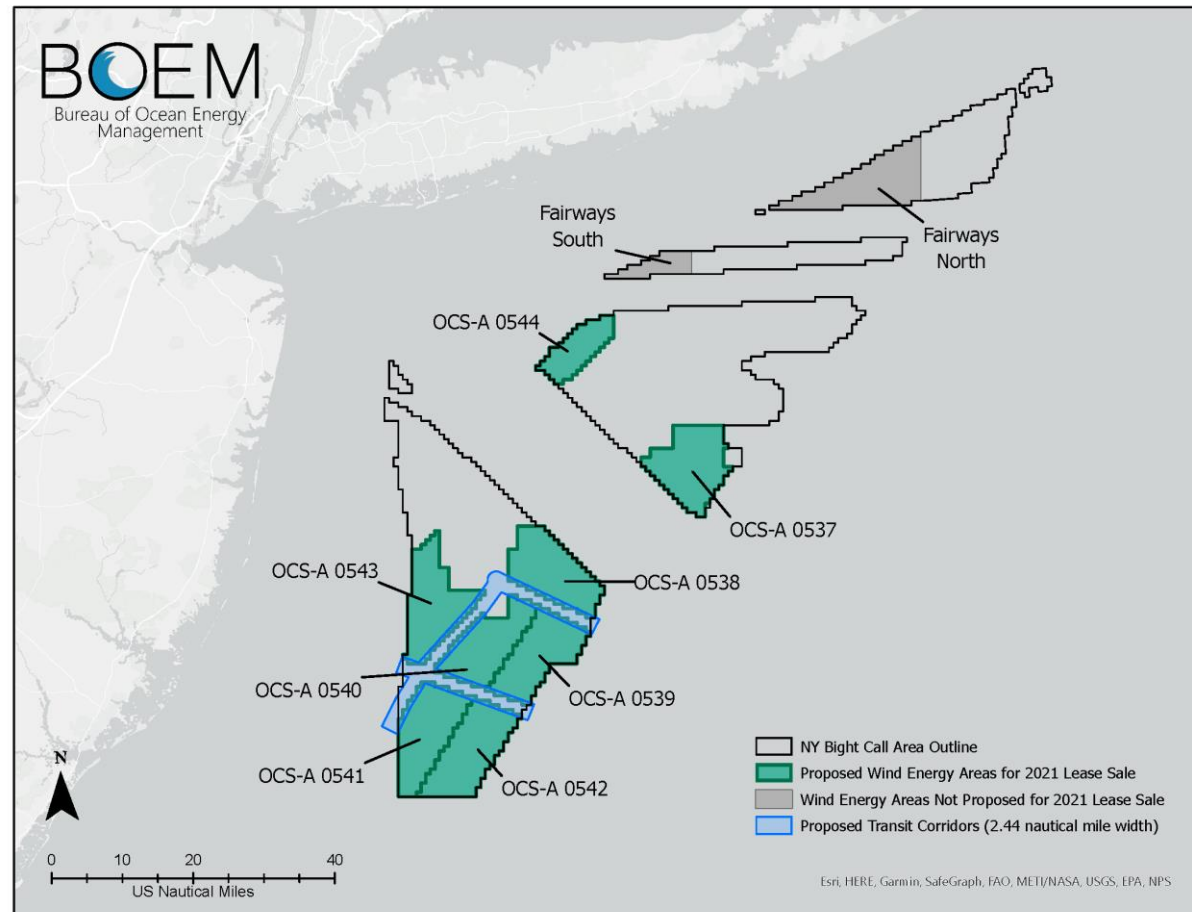


Council Policy on Wind Energy

- Adopted June 2018; originally written by MAFMC in 2015, in use as of 2016
- All elements of policy remain appropriate and are consistent with recent Council comments on projects
- Opportunity to enhance existing elements and add some new ones based on expertise gained over the past five years
- Potential additions:
 - Habitat mapping and characterization
 - Coordinating research and monitoring across projects
 - Coordinating layouts across projects
- PDT working on specific suggestions; will coordinate with others as needed
- **No Council action required today**

New York Bight Proposed Sale Notice

- Comment opportunity closes August 13
- More information: <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/new-york-bight>
- [April 28 NEFMC/MAFMC comment letter](#)



New York Bight Proposed Sale Notice

- Questions for stakeholders in the PSN (some omitted, see [notice](#)):
 - Feedback on the proposed number, size, orientation, and location and welcomes comments on which Lease Areas, if any, should be prioritized for inclusion, or exclusion, from this lease sale or future lease sales.
 - Comments on transit corridor attributes and the degree to which they meet potential users' needs.
 - BOEM is considering lease stipulations to direct benefits to underserved communities and to better develop the workforce needed to design, construct, operate, and maintain offshore wind farms
 - BOEM is proposing a lease stipulation that would require lessees to provide a semi-annual (i.e., every six months) progress report that summarizes engagement with ocean users potentially affected by proposed activities on the lease or proposed project easement.
 - BOEM seeks comment on methods to improve coordination and engagement among lessees, Federally recognized Tribes, ocean users, and stakeholders.
- **Council action: recommend whether to submit comments to BOEM**

Empire Wind Notice of Intent to prep EIS

- Comment opportunity closes July 19
- More information:
<https://www.boem.gov/Empire-Wind>
- Virtual scoping meetings
 - Wednesday, June 30, 5:00 PM ET
 - Thursday, July 8, 5:00 PM ET
 - Tuesday, July 13, 1:00 PM ET
- **Council action: recommend whether to submit comments to BOEM**



Image: Equinor

Empire Wind Project

- Two wind energy facilities (EW₁ and EW₂)
- Combined up to 174 turbines, two offshore substations, inter-array and up to three export cables, two onshore substations (Brooklyn and Oceanside)
- Monopile or gravity-based foundations
- Potential alternatives could include no-surface-occupancy areas, navigation corridors or buffers, time-of-year construction restrictions, other reasonable alternatives

Chesapeake Bay PARS: draft report

- Comment opportunity closes July 16
- For background and draft report: [Rulemaking docket](#)
- Coast Guard proposes five measures for consideration (see hatched areas on map)
- Seeking comments on these measures
- **Council action: recommend whether to submit comments to USCG**

