



New England Fishery Management Council

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Eric Reid, *Chair* | Cate O'Keefe, PhD, *Executive Director*

October 19, 2023

Zachary Jylkka
Office of Renewable Energy Programs
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
45600 Woodland Road, VAM-OREP
Sterling, Virginia 20166

Dear Zach,

On behalf of the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), I request an extension of the comment period for the draft Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) in the Gulf of Maine.

We appreciate that BOEM has taken this extra step of requesting public comment on the draft WEAs. However, the relatively short 30-day comment period does not provide sufficient time for us to convene both the Habitat Committee and the full Council to evaluate and describe any concerns we might have with the proposal. Our next Council meeting will be held December 5-7, and we would appreciate the ability to submit comments to BOEM after this meeting.

The Council has considered offshore wind energy issues numerous times in recent years and has worked diligently to provide thoughtful input to BOEM. A 30-day extension through December 20, 2023, would provide the opportunity to more fully evaluate the draft WEAs and to develop meaningful comments beneficial to BOEM's decision-making process. Lease area identification is a critical step in the offshore wind energy development process. As evidenced by the complexity of the spatial analysis BOEM conducted when developing these lease areas, there are many information sources and issues to consider simultaneously. We want to be certain that we fully understand BOEM's spatial analysis, and the views of the fishing industry, before providing comments to BOEM.

Thank you for considering our request, and for agreeing to participate in our upcoming Habitat Committee meeting to discuss these issues. Please contact Michelle Bachman (mbachman@nefmc.org) on my staff with any questions.

Sincerely,

Cate O'Keefe
Executive Director

Cc: Mike Pentony, Sue Tuxbury, Luke Feinberg, Eric Reid