

# Staff Presentation

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**NEFMC Habitat Committee  
and Advisory Panel  
October 26, 2021  
Via Webinar**



# Offshore Wind Policy Updates - Timeline

- Previous work
  - Council identified continued policy development as a 2021 work priority (October 2020)
  - PDT subgroup considered scoping comments, recent literature; drafted updates (July-August)
  - PDT review (September 20 and via correspondence)
- Today
  - NEFMC Habitat Committee and Advisory Panel review recommend changes
  - Suggest revisions as needed and Committee forwards to Council for approval
- Next steps
  - MAFMC Ecosystem and Ocean Policy Committee discussion (November)
  - NEFMC approval (December 5-7)
  - Possible opportunity for MAFMC approval (December 14-16)

# A few things to keep in mind...

- Will complement cable policy, which was written to encompass both telecommunication and electrical cabling issues
- Fish, fish habitat, and fisheries focus; protected species and wildlife not considered
- Research priorities and specific recommendations for science and monitoring will continue to be identified by NEFMC and other entities
- Language is intended to be relatively specific/detailed, but also relevant for the next few years

# BMPs and stakeholder engagement

- Specify that BOEM and wind developers should engage with the Councils, ROSA, and NOAA Fisheries

## Project siting and environmental review

- Recommend use of NOAA Fisheries Recommendations for Mapping Fish Habitat
- Avoid siting any structures in complex habitats
- Enumerate considerations for analysis of impacts to habitats, fish, and fisheries
- Recommend that Environmental Impact Statements include alternatives designed to minimize impacts on habitats and fisheries
- Encourage precautionary decision making when concerns are identified based on ongoing research

# Construction and operations

- Remove electrical cables during decommissioning
- Scour should mimic adjacent habitats
- Minimize boulder relocation and clearly document when relocation is necessary
- Noise from all sources should be minimized
- Impacts of in-water activities on spawning or settlement should be avoided or minimized
- Evaluate and minimize impacts associated with water entrainment

# Navigation and safety

- Support coordinated layouts across projects developed in consultation with fishermen
- Identified additional threats to safety and navigation
- Recommend marking in-water structures associated with floating projects

# Research and monitoring

- Expanded upon the research and monitoring section of the policy to specify this be done at project-specific and regional scales, before, during, and after construction to understand cumulative effects on habitats and ecosystems
- Recommend coordination of habitat, geological and geophysical, and fisheries surveys across projects, both prior to and during construction, and for ongoing monitoring
- Monitoring should be consistent with guidelines and recommendations from ROSA and NOAA Fisheries

# Compensation and mitigation

- Identify and mitigate impacts to fishery-independent monitoring surveys

# Project updates

- Recent scoping/NOIs
  - [Empire Wind](#), [Vineyard Wind South](#), [Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind](#), [Sunrise Wind](#)
- Current/upcoming scoping/NOIs
  - [Atlantic Shores](#) (comments due November 1)
  - Mayflower Wind (expected November 1)
- [South Fork](#) FEIS available as of August 16; ROD expected in October
- Final EA/FONSI and Final Sale Notice for [New York Bight leases](#) expected soon w/lease conditions
- All our letters are posted [here](#)

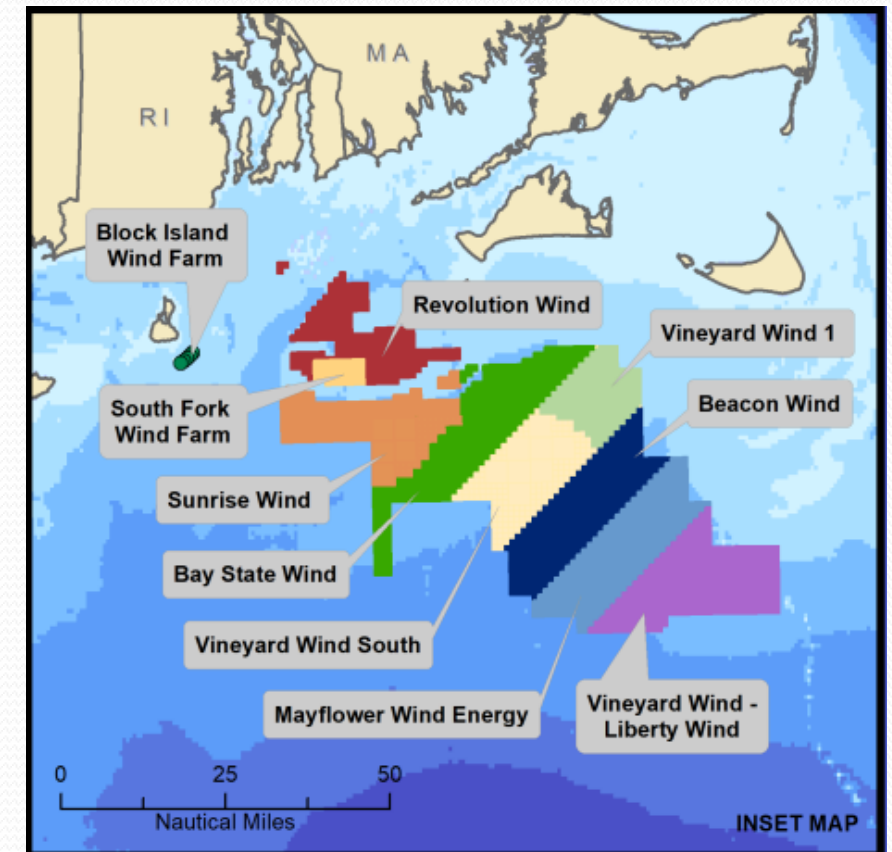
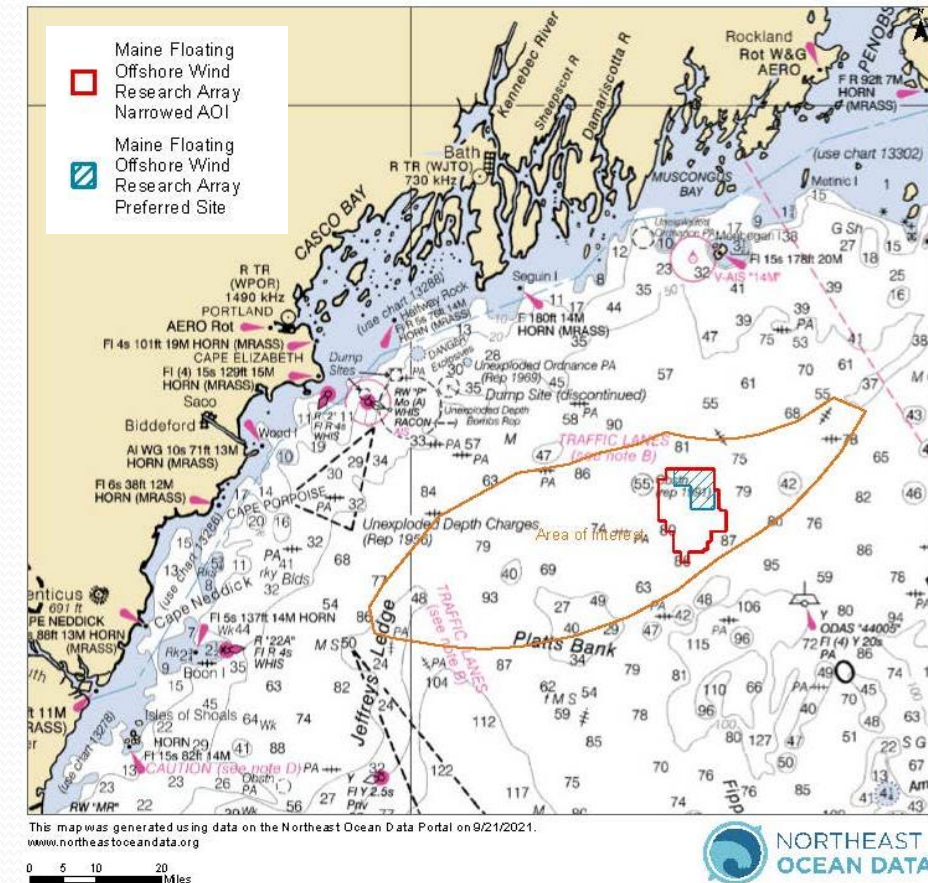


Image: BOEM

# Gulf of Maine Offshore Wind

- Maine
  - <https://www.maineoffshorewind.org/>
  - Floating lease request submitted to BOEM
  - Offshore Wind Roadmap: Advisory Committee and working groups meeting regularly ([calendar](#))
- New Hampshire
  - <https://www.offshorewindnh.com/>
  - Commission and working groups meeting regularly
- Federal activities
  - Taskforce meeting TBD; within next 6 months



# Additional items of interest

- Responsible Offshore Science Alliance
  - Recent meeting on September 24. [Agenda](#):
    - Why are we collecting data on fisheries relevant to OSW?
    - How do we achieve regional data sharing?
    - What is the role of ROSA in data standardization, storage, and accessibility?
  - Working towards Regional Science Framework
- The Nature Conservancy Marine Mapping Tool
  - <https://maps.tnc.org/marinemap>
- RODA Synthesis of the Science report coming soon; early planning for SOS II workshop

# Northern Edge

- Habitat PDT met on June 15, September 20, and October 25
  - Compiling information to provide background and support decision-making
  - Requested and received report on analysis of scallop dredge impacts (follow-up work to 2016 RSA study NA16NMF4540045, Impact of Disturbance on Habitat Recovery in Habitat Management Areas on the Northern Edge of Georges Bank by Scott Gallagher, et al.)
  - Summarized recent literature on gear effects
  - Currently working to synthesize these findings with Fishing Effects model results – does new work overturn/refute our current understanding of fishing gear effects on habitat?
- Next steps
  - PDT finalizes white paper (December/January)
  - Committee review and discussion at next meeting (potentially in January)
  - Committee could then ask for more information from the PDT, recommend that the Council initiate a habitat management action, or recommend against initiating an action

# Aquaculture updates

- Blue Water Fisheries project
  - NMFS is the lead agency on the EIS (with EPA and USACOE)
    - Chris Schillaci will speak more on this process
  - Developer wants to include Atlantic Salmon in the project
    - NEFMC has an Atlantic Salmon FMP which includes a provision related to aquaculture authorization in the EEZ
    - In September, Council added a potential work priority to the list for 2022
- Aquaculture Coordination Plan – approved April 2021
  - Engage in project-specific conversations (e.g., BWF project)
  - Engage in regional-scale conversations (e.g., around Aquaculture Opportunity Areas)
  - Continue to develop expertise



# 2021 Work Priorities - status

- Aquaculture coordination plan – completed in April, living document
- Northern Edge – white paper in progress
- Policy updates – reviewed the updated Wind Energy Policy today; Council approval planned for December
- OSW activities (ROSA, etc.) – ongoing
- OSW comment letters – ongoing; two more scoping periods this year
- Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment – ongoing; expect to wrap up July 2022. NHRA-HCVA contract underway.
- ASMFC Habitat Committee – meeting later this fall
- Stellwagen Sanctuary Advisory Council – habitat staff no longer tasked with this
- Habitat support for other FMPs – analysis for scallop, groundfish actions coming soon

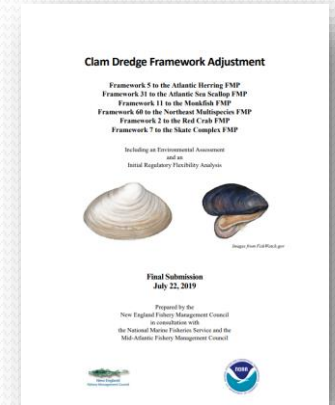
# 2022 Work Priorities – possible items

- Regional collaboration on fisheries habitat and non-fishing issues
  - Participate in ROSA activities; collaborate with RODA and other offshore wind partners on fisheries issues.
  - Comment and consult on aquaculture planning and development issues using the Council's Aquaculture Policy and coordination plan.
  - Participate on ASMFC habitat committee.
  - Develop habitat and fishery related comments on non-fishing activities, particularly wind power, in consultation with other agencies (including NMFS and MAFMC).
  - Co-chair Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment Inshore Work Team.

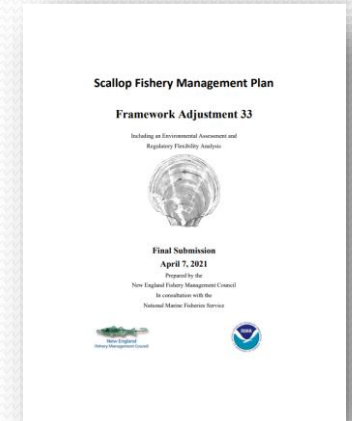
# 2022 Work Priorities – possible items

- Fishery Management Actions

- Assess the possibility of, and if possible, develop an action to revise Habitat Management Areas on Northern Edge of Georges Bank
- Develop an action to facilitate Atlantic salmon aquaculture proposals in the EEZ
- Develop an action to consider additional HAPC designations for complex habitat in SNE
- Habitat impacts (NEPA analyses) of other Council management actions

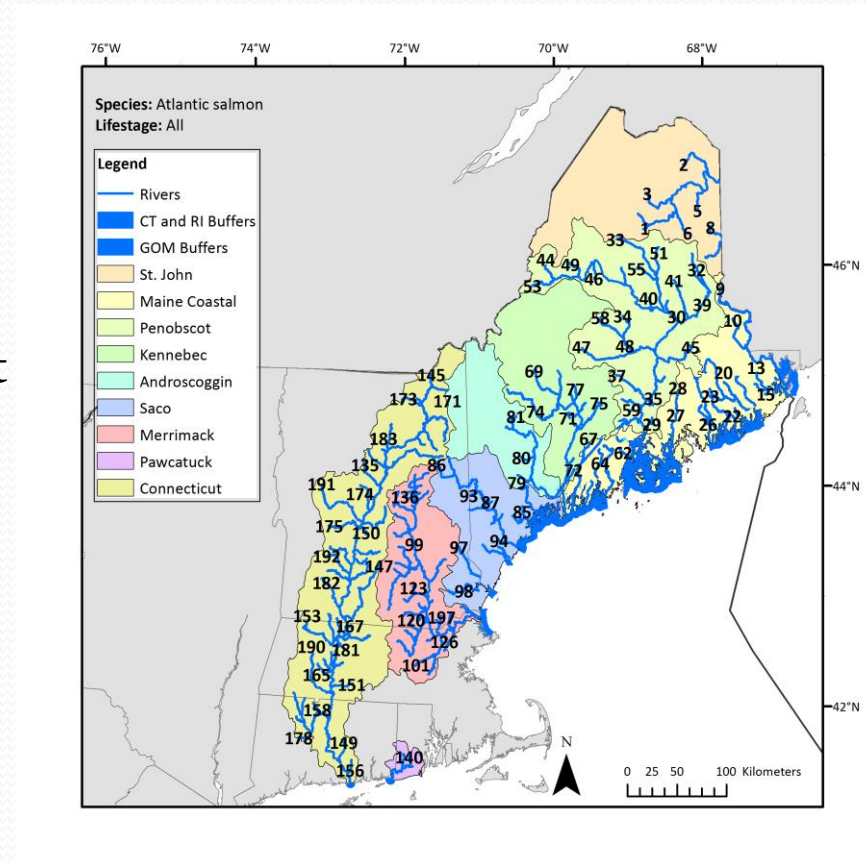


NOAA FishWatch



# Action to facilitate salmon aquaculture

- Task added to list of possible priorities in September
- FMP for [Atlantic salmon](#), [§ 648.41 Framework specifications](#).
  - (a) ***Within season management action.*** The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) may, at any time, initiate action to implement, add to or adjust Atlantic salmon management measures to:
    - (1) Allow for Atlantic salmon aquaculture projects in the EEZ, provided such an action is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Atlantic Salmon FMP
    - Framework measures were adopted via Salmon A1 (OHA1)
- Further discussion planned with GARFO next month on what this action might look like, timing, etc.



# Action to designate HAPC in SNE

- Task added to list of possible priorities at September Council meeting
- NEFMC approved Cox Ledge HMA in OHA2; not approved by NOAA due to fishing restrictions proposed by Council
- Impacts to this location are ongoing concern due to overlap with wind energy lease areas
- New information about cod spawning activity and distribution of complex habitat

