



Position Statement on Offshore Wind Energy Approved July 31, 2019

Offshore wind energy (OWE) development has become a focal point as the U.S. tries to find renewable energy solutions to meet an increased energy demand and address growing concerns about climate change. The interest in OWE has been broad-based at both the national and local levels, with many states establishing renewable energy standards over the next few decades that require a diversified energy portfolio including wind.¹

The Department of Energy has also developed an OWE strategy working with the Department of Interior's Bureau for Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) that identifies specific actionable items aimed to facilitate the research, development, and operation of OWE.² These efforts are reinforced by technological advances that have significantly reduced the costs associated with wind energy production, favorable tax subsidies, and the economic prospects of the OWE sector creating high paying U.S. jobs.

All these factors have led to a focus on developing OWE along the US Atlantic coast because it contains many high energy load centers (e.g., Boston, New York, Washington DC) and has an abundance of available wind resources. BOEM, the federal agency tasked with managing OWE lease areas, currently has fifteen active leases with developers between Massachusetts and North Carolina.

Each lease is at a different stage in the build out process which includes a site assessment (SA) to determine the optimal location to place wind turbines, and a construction and operations plan (COPs) that contains specific details about the project and its expected energy output capacity. The OWE development process also requires several state and federal regulatory reviews that ensure the projects have minimal impact to the environment and its user groups.

The current leases cover over 2,700 square miles of ocean, and in the near future, many more may potentially become available. Given the potential impacts of OWE development on recreational fishing access and the marine environment, the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) wants to be an engaged stakeholder in OWE development. Overall, ASA believes that OWE has the potential to benefit the recreational fishing community but has established the following major topics for consideration with a focus on minimizing the potential for negative impacts.

Access Plan — the area around the wind energy infrastructure (e.g., turbines, transmission cable runs) are governed by the United States Coast Guard and the developers. To ensure maximum fishing access, ASA recommends:

- That recreational fishing access near wind energy infrastructure be allowed to the maximum extent possible.

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- The developers create an access plan that clearly documents the allowable use at all stages of the project (pre-construction, construction, operation and deconstruction).
- The developers form an access plan committee that includes representation from the recreational fishing and boating community.
- If access must be restricted for safety reasons, we recommend those restrictions do not overlap with established fishing seasons.

Monitoring Plan — there are many unknowns regarding how OWE projects will impact the ecosystem including, but not limited to, fish distribution and abundance, habitat availability, and recreational and commercial fisheries. ASA recommends:

- Coordinating with scientific advisors from industry, state and federal agencies and academic institutions to establish standardized survey designs during all phases of the project and across all seasons.
- Coordinating across adjacent lease areas to establish comprehensive monitoring plans that enable the analysis of cumulative impacts.
- Providing a clear process for the involvement of stakeholder groups including the recreational fishing and boating community.
- Using existing survey data where applicable.

Construction and Operations Plan — engagement with recreational fishing stakeholders is essential to minimizing impacts during the construction and operation phase of the project. ASA recommends,

- Establishing transit lanes to ensure safe navigation between inshore fishing ports and offshore fishing grounds.
- Siting and spacing the turbines to minimize impacts to known fishing grounds and allow safe drift fishing and maneuvering when fishing for large pelagic fish species.
- Establishing optimal construction times that avoids existing fishing seasons.
- Using foundation and scour pads that maximize available habitat to fishes.
- Transmission cable runs that avoid areas of essential fish habitat and are buried at a depth that eliminates electromagnetic field impacts.
- Decommission plans that fully consider the importance of the wind energy infrastructure to the environment and ecosystem.

Mitigation Plan — the associated economic impacts on the recreational fishing industry from OWE are largely unknown. We recommend a comprehensive mitigation plan that accounts for all known and unknown impacts. ASA recommends:

- Creating mitigation programs that offset impacts of OWE on the recreational fishing community through supplemental funding to state artificial reef programs, support of stock assessment surveys, recreational fishing and boating infrastructure, and other efforts that support recreational fishing and the marine resources.
- Working with state and federal agencies to develop bond criteria to be required of all offshore wind facilities to ensure that adequate financial resources are available to offset any unforeseen impacts during the lifetime of the projects.

[1 "State Renewable Portfolio Standards and Goals," National Conference of State Legislatures](#)

[2 "U.S. Offshore Wind Sets Sail," U.S. Department of Energy](#)

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