

HABITAT PROTECTION AND ECOSYSTEM BASED MANAGEMENT

Advisory Panel Report
Stacie Crowe, Acting AP Chair
May 2023

NOAA FISHERIES HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

EFH CONSULTATION UPDATE

- 475 EFH consultation requests and 760 for the year an increase to the most NMFS Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) has had in the last ten years
- Offshore wind projects the administration's, and NOAA's, highest priority for EFH consultation:
 - Assist GARFO with the Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Project
 - Review Kitty Hawk North, Kitty Hawk South, and the Carolina Long Bay offshore wind projects
 - habitat minimization focused on: minimizing scour protection and identifying and requesting the best management practices be used by the offshore wind community.
- Port Everglades remains a very high priority, working with the Army Corps of Engineers and Florida agencies to full develop a mitigation plan. This project has the largest amount of impacts to coral and hardbottom habitat ever authorized for U.S. waters, including more than 150 acres. The planned mitigation would be the most coral restoration ever attempted in the world, if this moves forward.
- Fish passage and hydropower efforts are also increasing, and SERO issued a new license for the Santee Cooper hydroelectric project in January.



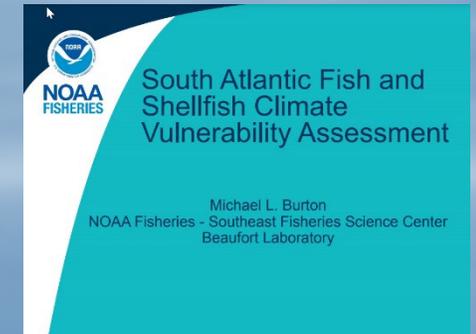
NOAA FISHERIES HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

EFH CONSULTATION UPDATE

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- Kitty Hawk South is going to be more challenging, in terms of environmental impacts, because cable transit will be longer possibly through, or under, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), and the Outer Banks.
- While each offshore wind development has their own cables, they should consider joining them somewhere in the ocean, and then one path in.
- Members requested clarification on status of offshore wind development of Duck NC which has been identified as an Atlantic Sturgeon hotspot and it appears that it is not still under consideration.

NOAA FISHERIES SOUTH ATLANTIC CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT



Potential for Species Distribution Change



Key Results

- Most Impactful Exposure Factors – SST, Salinity*, Ocean Acidification
- 22 species Very High Vulnerability - Anadromous, Invertebrates, Deep-water Demersals
- 24 species High Vulnerability - Coastal and Reef Fishes
- 25 species Moderate Vulnerability - Pelagics, Forage, Coastal and Reef Fishes
- Distribution Change – Majority have Very High or High potential for change

NOAA FISHERIES SOUTH ATLANTIC CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- A good example of a species that has both shifted north and offshore is the Atlantic migratory stock of striped bass, which used to have a substantial fishery off North Carolina and hasn't landed a striped bass, from the ocean, since 2011.
- Gray triggerfish SEDAR 82 data workshop looked at spatiotemporal factors and ecosystem factors showed more gray triggerfish were being caught north of North Carolina with recreational fisheries targeting them in Virginia and New Jersey, in particular, Maryland.
- Once finalized, the AP would like experts associated with the report to highlight for the AP what this report, and assessment, means for habitat within our area of interest.

NOAA FISHERIES EFH 5 YEAR REVIEW

- Reviewed EFH designation history
- Review designations and EFH User Guide
- Review components from Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and identify focus areas for Review
- Identified AP Members to serve on three EFH 5 Year Review Subcommittees:
 - Buttonwood Clarification Subcommittee: Simen Kaalstad, Chair, Rene Baumstark, David Webb
 - Limited FEP II Update (Prey and References) Subcommittee: Wilson Laney, Chair, Kevin Spanik, Laurent Cherubin
 - Tidal Freshwater Boundary Subcommittee: Casey Knight, Chair, Anne Deaton, Stacie Crowe, Rene Baumstark, Wilson Laney, Paul Medders, Sam Young

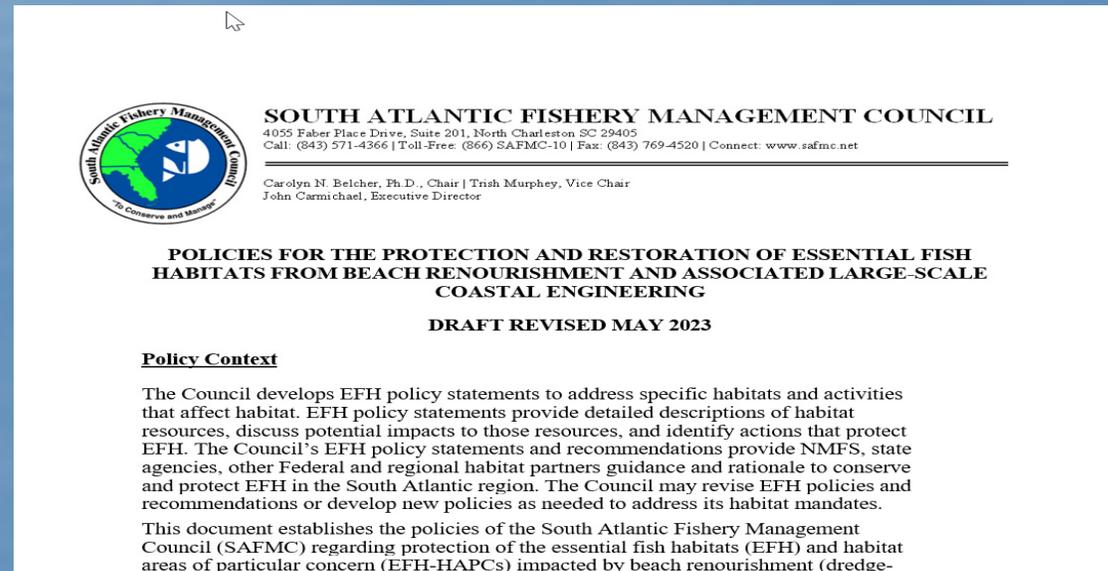
NOAA FISHERIES EFH 5 YEAR REVIEW

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- The review does need to be comprehensive for our entire area, inclusive of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, so that it's not balanced to one state or another.
- Getting state participation in the process is critical and the key criteria was to make it achievable.
- In Florida, buttonwoods functionally act the same, habitat-wise, as mangroves so the AP is proposing to clarify that in the user's guide.
- NOAA Fisheries and state members identified a clarification for the user's guide on an issue that routinely comes up in permitting and consultations throughout the region. With tidal freshwater habitats designated as EFH, where does the tidal freshwater habitat end, and where, in our coastal rivers, is that line?

EFH POLICY STATEMENT UPDATE: BEACH DREDGING AND LARGE-SCALE COASTAL ENGINEERING

- Subcommittee: Wilson Laney, Paula Keener, Cindy Cooksey, Anne Deaton, Rene Baumstark, Paul Medders, and John Ellis.
- The Chair and Sub Committee reviewed the policy, integrated members comments in the draft provided and reviewed and updated the draft by the AP during the session.
- Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel members completed the review and revision of the EFH Policy Statement Council consideration for approval.



BOEM OFFSHORE WIND ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

Fisheries Mitigation Guidance Development

- November 23, 2021, BOEM published a “Request for Information”
 - Requested information / perspective to inform BOEM’s development of draft guidance on avoidance, minimization & potential compensation
 - For impacts from OSW projects on commercial & recreational fisheries.
- June 2022:
 - BOEM published draft guidance document & opened 60-day comment period
 - concluded on August 22, 2022
 - 88 comments received - 79 organizations and 9 individuals
- Summer 2023:
 - Consultation with Tribal Nations.
- TBD: Issue final guidance.

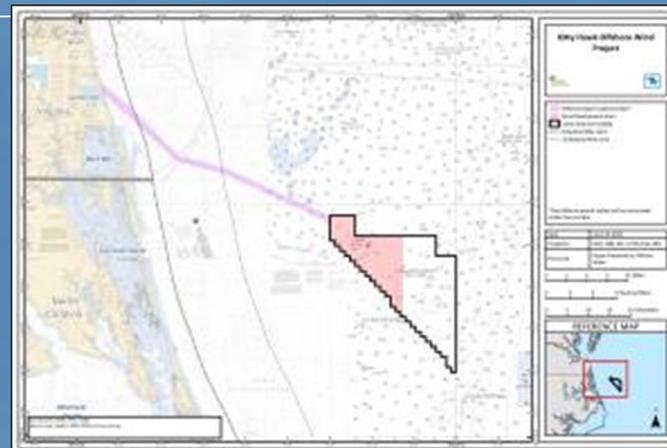
Kitty Hawk Wind

North

DEIS – April 2024
27 miles offshore Corolla
Up to 70 foundations
If approved, construction in 2027

South

COP is under BOEM review If approved, construction in 2027-2028

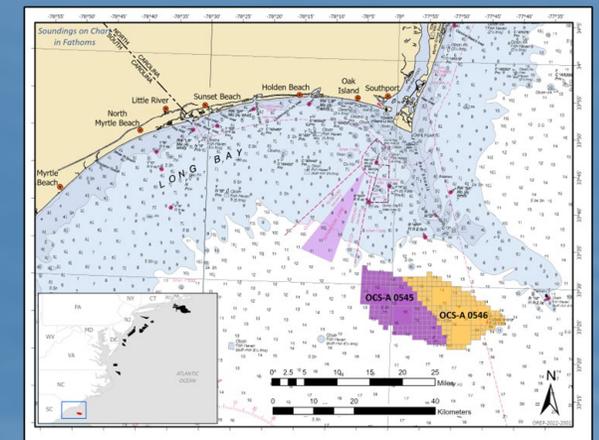


Carolina Long Bay

Leases executed June 2022
Communication Plans developed
Joint Survey Plan under BOEM review

OCS-A 0545
TotalEnergies
Renewables USA, LLC

OCS-A 0546
Duke Energy
Renewables Wind, LLC

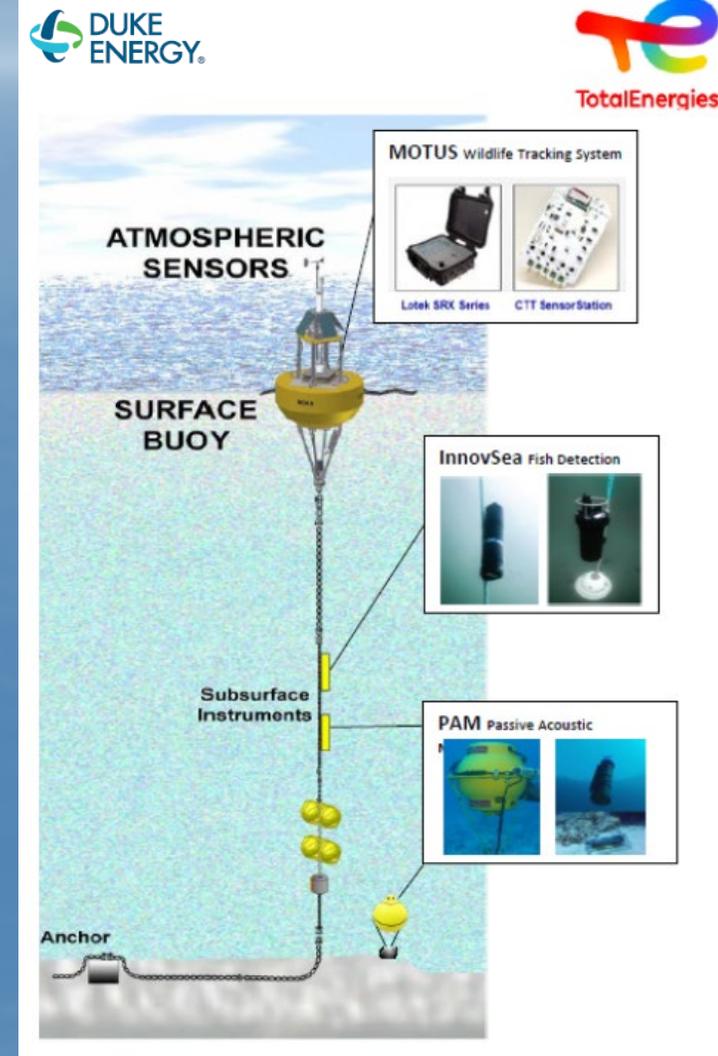
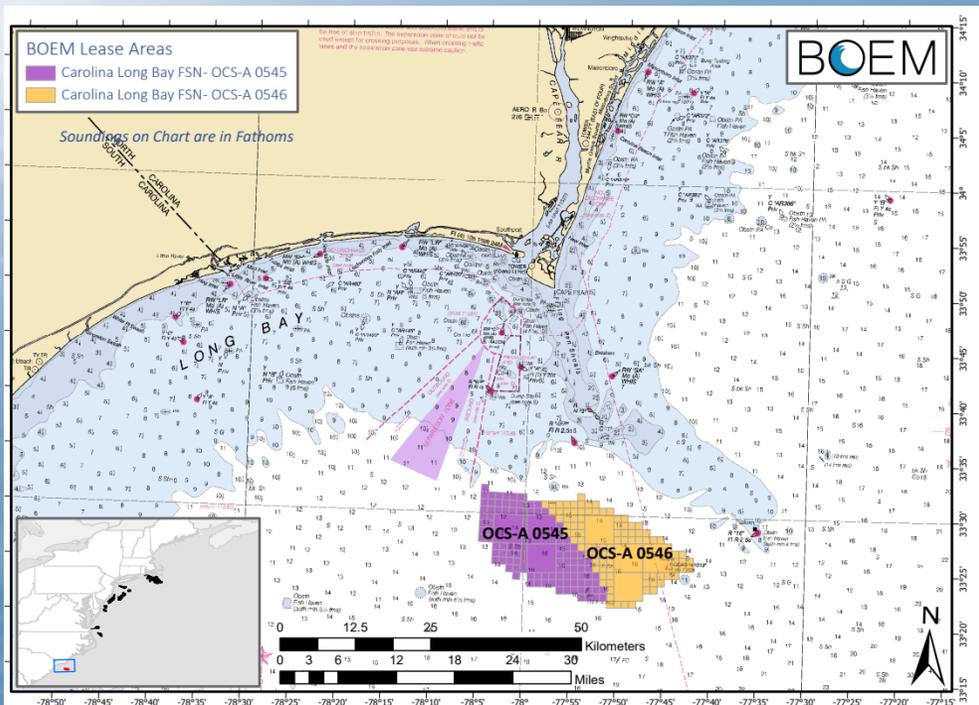


CAROLINA LONG BAY 2023 OFFSHORE WIND ACTIVITIES

Carolina Long Bay

OCS-A 0545: TotalEnergies Renewables USA, LLC 54,937 acres

OCS-A 0546: Duke Energy Renewables Wind, LLC 55,154 acres



OFFSHORE WIND ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- Rick Robbins, fisheries liaison for Kitty Hawk Wind, did a very great study looking at the potential impact of Kitty Hawk Wind on the ecosystem and fishing in the area and a model for other areas.
- Off North Carolina in the Carolina Long Bay area, there is quite a lot of pavement habitat, which is shallow habitat that may not allow full burial of cables. Members wanted to know if any research had been conducted that looks at ways to mitigate electromagnetic fields (EMF), or heat, coming from cables when full burial is not possible. BOEM noted they have an [EMF white paper](#) online and have funded some studies.
- Concern over what type of material used to cover cables since there are things that leach out of that material that would be bad, as far as the health of the attached epifauna.
- BOEM should address possible questions about whether or not there are certain materials are more desirable than others by reviewing the extensive literature about artificial reefs.
- Concern over the issue of recycling turbine blades, which in the past were constructed from not readily recyclable materials and ended up in landfills.
- When decommissioning, whether the cable is buried in the sand or under mattresses or surface scour protection, that removal might be more detrimental to the environment than just leaving it in place.

EFH POLICY STATEMENT ON ENERGY EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT



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POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF ESSENTIAL FISH HABITATS FROM ENERGY EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES (December 14, 2015)

Introduction

This document provides guidance from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- Policy update with particular focus on fisheries and EFH
 - Identify best management practices associated with avoidance and minimization.
 - Identify research needs associated with offshore wind development.
- The intent is to keep all the existing energy activities like oil and gas but condensing that information down and emphasize new and ongoing information.
- Draft outline which incorporates offshore wind as a new section under development.
- Engage other BOEM staff to access records of decision and EISs as needed as the process progresses.
- Continue to engage fisheries liaisons with the individual wind projects as part of the review process.
- Develop a separate section to address renewable energy with the focus on offshore wind development.
- Report on the progress of the update will be provided at the November AP meeting for the entire Panel's consideration.

REGIONAL RESEARCH AND TOOLS SUPPORTING EFH CONSERVATION



Update on Regional Surveys

SEAMAP-SA/SECOORA Data Portal- Integration biological surveys

- Provides long term habitat and species information needs supporting the Council habitat conservation efforts.

Member Comments and Recommendations:

- Panel members provided priority research and mapping recommendations to be conducted in the South Atlantic region which were integrated into the SAFMC Research and Monitoring Prioritization Plan.
- Members discussed the information provided in Council online tools and information systems noting these resources are valuable and while presently under review the Panel recommends the information be added back to the website when possible.
- In addition, members supported a number of developing regional tools which in part draw directly from Council supported Web Services.

SEAMAP-SA ONLINE DATABASE

Iteration 2 (Under Development)

Developed and maintained by Axiom DS

Hosted within SECOORA Data Portal

All funded SEAMAP-SA Surveys

Administrator Interface for data & code table importation & deletion

User-driven queries by Survey and Data Type

User-driven data summaries and comparisons among SEAMAP-SA Surveys & other SECOORA data

Metadata zipped with data download

User tracking

