



New England Fishery Management Council

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C.M. "Rip" Cunningham, Jr., *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

June 22, 2012

Jessica Bradley, Project Coordinator
United States Department of Interior
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Office of Offshore Renewable Energy Programs
381 Elden Street, HM 1328
Herndon, VA 20170-4817

RE: Comments on Notice of Proposed Grant Area and Request for Competitive Interest in the Area of the Deepwater Wind Block Island Transmission System Proposal [Docket No. BOEM-2012-0009]

Dear Ms. Bradley:

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) submits the following comments in response to BOEM's notice regarding Deepwater Wind's right-of-way grant request offshore of Rhode Island.

Impacts to fish habitat and fisheries

The ROW grant area, or portions of it, is designated Essential Fish Habitat for various species managed by the Council. The most important of these include Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*); whiting (*Merluccius bilinearis*); red hake (*Urophycis chuss*); winter flounder (*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*); yellowtail flounder (*Limanda ferruginea*); windowpane flounder (*Scophthalmus aquosus*); ocean pout (*Macrozoarces americanus*); Atlantic sea scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*); Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*); little skate (*Leucoraja erinacea*); and winter skate (*Leucoraja ocellata*). The Council encourages BOEM to begin a thorough analysis of the potential adverse effects of wind energy installations on Essential Fish Habitat. We are pleased to hear that you have been coordinating with the National Marine Fisheries Service on this issue.

The Council is also concerned about impacts to fishing activities. The ROW area includes active and important fishing grounds for species managed by the Council, including herring, monkfish, skates, sea scallops, and other species managed under the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan. Much of this fishing is prosecuted using mobile, bottom-tending gears. We encourage BOEM to openly discuss with the fishing industry the likely impacts on fishing operations associated with submerged transmission cables, and welcome a continued dialogue with BOEM on this issue. In particular, we hope that the transmission cable can be

buried to a sufficient depth so as to not interfere with mobile bottom-tending fishing gear operations, including both otter trawls and scallop dredges.

We recommend that BOEM obtain data on species distribution, fishing effort and fishing revenues directly from the National Marine Fisheries Service for use in the environmental review process. Of course, past fishing effort distributions may not reflect future activities, and fishery management areas are subject to change over time. Direct consultation with the fishing industry will generate the most current information about fishing activities occurring in the area.

Coordination with CMSP

We commend BOEM's commitment to following principles of coastal and marine spatial planning, as well as its commitment to coordinate with whatever planning body is eventually established for the region. However, we remain concerned that the current piecemeal/state-by-state development may fail to adequately address multiple use issues, including fisheries, at a regional level. Reiterating a comment we have made previously, the Council believes that wind energy siting issues should be addressed through the appropriate regional planning bodies to identify competing uses before designating an area for possible wind energy development.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "H".

Paul Howard
Executive Director