

Peer-review of NEFSC Draft Survey Mitigation Plans Relative to Offshore Wind Development

May 22-24 2024

Background Information

Introduction

NOAA Fisheries shares a commitment with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to develop offshore wind energy, while protecting biodiversity and promoting ocean co-use. One element of this shared commitment includes mitigation of the impact of offshore wind energy development on NOAA Fisheries surveys. The [Federal Survey Mitigation Strategy](#)¹ (the Strategy) describes the impacts of wind energy development on fisheries independent surveys and outlines the goals, objectives, and actions to guide the development and implementation of a program to mitigate the impacts on fisheries independent surveys over the expected duration (30+ year) of wind energy development in the Northeast U.S. (Hare et al. 2022). Action 1.1.1 of the Strategy calls for the development of survey-specific mitigation plans (plans) for all impacted NOAA Fisheries surveys. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) goal in the development of the Northeast Survey Mitigation Program (Program) and survey mitigation plans is to ensure NEFSC can continue to provide equal or higher quality science. Products include precise, accurate, and timely surveys, stock assessments, data, and advice, to NOAA Fisheries partners, stakeholders, and other ocean users, in light of impacts caused by offshore wind energy development now and into the future. NEFSC survey teams have worked with internal and external expertise to develop draft plans for each of the long-term, recurring surveys conducted by NEFSC that will be impacted by offshore wind development. The survey plans include descriptions of the impacted survey, specific stakeholders for the data collected, impacts of offshore wind development, and planned mitigation measures to address the impacts of wind energy development on scientific surveys.

Objective 3.3 of the Strategy outlines the use of peer-review processes to ensure elements of the Program represent the best science available. To this end, NEFSC has requested the expertise of the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC), Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to support the peer review of eight of the draft survey mitigation plans prepared by the NEFSC, plus three plans for new supplemental surveys. Similarly, the NEFSC has requested the expertise of the Atlantic Scientific Review Group² to support the peer review of six protected species survey mitigation plans.

Survey mitigation plans are intended to be flexible. Goal 4 of the Strategy calls for adaptive implementation, in recognition of the long-term nature of survey mitigation plans (30+ years),

¹ Hare JA, Blyth BJ, Ford KH, Hooker BR, Jensen BM, Lipsky A, Nachman C, Pfiieffer L, Rasser M, Renshaw K. 2022. NOAA Fisheries and BOEM Federal Survey Mitigation Implementation Strategy - Northeast U.S. Region. NOAA Technical Memorandum 292. Woods Hole, MA. 33 pp.

² [Scientific Review Groups](#)

the dynamic nature of wind energy development, and to allow for adaptation to future changes in survey technologies, marine ecosystems, and human-uses of marine ecosystems. We anticipate the Strategy, Program, and survey plans (including new survey approaches) will be annually evaluated and adapted for the duration of wind energy development in the Northeast U.S.

Panel Review Charge

The primary objective of NEFSC survey mitigation plans is to ensure NEFSC and NOAA Fisheries can provide survey data of equal or higher quality to stakeholders in light of impacts to long-running surveys from offshore wind energy development. An external review of survey mitigation plans conducted by an independent panel of fisheries experts will evaluate the detail and scientific soundness of the mitigation approaches described in each plan, following a set of Terms of Reference (below). A focus of the review will be to evaluate the relative effectiveness of proposed survey mitigation responses to the 4 impacts of offshore wind energy development previously evaluated and reported by the NEFSC in regulatory review documents, including in Hare et al. (2022). The 4 impacts are:

1. Potential changes in habitat
2. Impacts on a survey due to preclusion from the survey area
3. Needed changes to a survey's statistical design
4. Reduced sampling efficiency

Furthermore, the panel will assess the plan's effectiveness of addressing 6 key elements of survey mitigation:

1. Evaluation of survey designs
2. Identification and development of new survey approaches
3. Calibration and integration of new survey approaches
4. Development of interim provisional survey indices
5. Wind energy monitoring to fulfill regional scientific survey data needs
6. Development and communication of new regional data streams

Survey Mitigation Plans to be Reviewed

Existing surveys

- Spring and Fall Bottom Trawl Surveys
- Scallop Video/Dredge Survey
- Atlantic Surfclam/Ocean Quahog Surveys
- Northern Shrimp Trawl Survey
- Cooperative Gulf of Maine Bottom Longline Survey
- Ecosystems Monitoring Survey (EcoMon), including Continuous Plankton Recorder (CPR) Survey
- Coastal Shark Bottom Longline Survey
- Cooperative Atlantic States Shark Popping and Nursery Surveys (COASTSPAN)

New/Expanded surveys

- Hook and Line Survey
- eDNA Survey
- Trap/Video Survey

Terms of Reference

1. **Existing survey** - Does the plan describe the existing survey design, methods, and uses of the data generated from the survey with a level of detail sufficient to assess proposed mitigation solutions for offshore wind impacts? If not, please describe what additional detail is needed.
2. **Impacts on the survey** - Does the plan adequately describe how the survey may be affected by the 4 impacts of wind energy development?
 - a. Are there additional offshore wind related impacts the plan should consider?
 - b. Are key areas of uncertainty in the impacts from offshore wind identified and addressed?
3. **Mitigation of impacts** - Will the proposed approach mitigate the identified survey impacts to ensure time series continuity and the same or better data quality compared to current survey methodologies?
 - a. Does the plan effectively describe approaches, both specific and general, for addressing each of the 6 elements of survey mitigation (Hare et al. 2022)?
 - b. What additional mitigation plan elements or mitigation strategies should be considered?
 - c. Are key assumptions made about actions to mitigate impacts reasonably justified?
 - d. Are key areas of uncertainty in the effectiveness of the survey mitigation sufficiently described and addressed in the plan elements?
4. **Communication** - Does the plan effectively describe steps for communicating important changes in plan implementation? How can communication plans be improved?

Meeting Review Logistics

Draft Plan Review Documents

- Draft Plan Review Documents publicly released ~April 30, 2024 and served through NEFSC Website Landing Page
- Presentations available (at least in draft form) the week before the review

Date and Timing

- May 22-24
 - May 22 9:30-5:30
 - May 23 8:30-5:30
 - May 24 8:30-12:30

Survey Mitigation Plan Review Agenda

Date	Time	Survey	Survey Lead (TBD)
May 22	10:45-12:00	Scallop	Dana Morton
	1:15-2:30	Surfclam/Ocean Quahog	Dana Morton
	2:45-4:00	Northern Shrimp	Dana Morton
	4:15-5:30	EcoMon and CPR	Chris Melrose
May 23	8:45-10:45	Bottom Trawl (spring and fall)	Catherine Foley
	11:00-12:15	Gulf of Maine Bottom Longline	Dave McElroy
	1:30-2:45	Coastal Shark Bottom Longline	Michelle Passerotti
	3:00-4:15	COASTSPAN	Cami McCandless
	4:15-5:30	Hook and Line	Jason Morson
May 24	8:45-10:00	eDNA	Richard McBride
	10:15-11:30	Trap/Video	Madison Hall

Location and Format

- In-person meeting at the Narragansett, RI Lab's Main Conference Room (28 Tarzwell Dr, Narragansett, RI)
 - Meeting space may be limited and may have to be honored on a first-come first-serve basis
- Provide webinar option for presenters, panelists, and public for those unable to attend
- U-shaped room set up with panel and presenters facing screen - accommodating about 12 people
 - Rest of seating around the U

Review Panel Members

- 3 MAFMC SSC
 - Wendy Gabriel (chair), Rob Latour, Brian Rothschild
- 3 NEFMC SSC
 - Yong Chen, Adam Delargy, Richard Merrick,
- 2 ASMFC ASC
 - Jim Gartland, Marcel Reichert
- Peer review panelist serve as lead for 1-2 surveys to coordinate response to ToRs. Staff will serve as rapporteurs take notes for each survey discussion to help lead with developing response to ToRs. Survey lead and rapporteur assignments are:
 - **Scallop:** Adam Delargy; Michelle Bachman
 - **Surfclam/Quahog:** Brian Rothschild; Brandon Muffley
 - **Northern Shrimp:** Yong Chen; Jenny Couture

- **EcoMon and CPR:** Richard Merrick, Michelle Bachman
- **Bottom Trawl:** Jim Gartland; Pat Campfield
- **GOM Bottom LL:** Yong Chen; Rachel Feeney
- **Coastal Shark Bottom LL:** Rob Latour; Brandon Muffley
- **COASTSPAN:** Rob Latour; Brandon Muffley
- **Hook and Line:** Marcel Reichert; Pat Campfield
- **eDNA:** Richard Merrick; Rachel Feeney
- **Trap/Video:** Marcel Reichert; Pat Campfield