

Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG) Annual Bulletin

October 2022

E-TWG Meetings

The E-TWG met three times in the last year to discuss efforts to develop regional and site-level guidance for research and monitoring (see below), the future role of the E-TWG relative to other regionally focused efforts, and coordination among leaseholders in the New York Bight. Meetings were held virtually.

Membership

E-TWG membership has expanded to include new member organizations, including RWE Renewables Americas, TotalEnergies US Renewables, and Invenergy. The E-TWG also saw changes in representatives from several member organizations. Many thanks to outgoing members for their time and a warm welcome to new representatives!

E-TWG Website

To keep up-to-date with E-TWG activities and access offshore wind-related resources, visit the [E-TWG website](#). Between July 2021 and September 2022, over 5,000 visitors accessed the website from across the globe.



We are pleased to share key highlights from the New York State Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG). In the past year, over 600 people were involved with E-TWG activities (see below), with particularly broad engagement via the 2022 State of the Science Workshop. Thanks to all those who contributed their time and expertise!

About the E-TWG

The E-TWG is an independent advisory body to the State of New York with a regional focus on offshore wind and wildlife issues in the eastern U.S. This team of stakeholders includes 17 advisory member organizations, comprised of offshore wind developers and science-based non-governmental organizations, as well as 15 observer member organizations from state and federal agencies.

2022 State of the Science Workshop on Wildlife and Offshore Wind Energy

The third State of the Science Workshop took place in Tarrytown, New York in July, followed by a virtual session in September. The goals of the workshop were to 1) engage and inform stakeholders about the state of knowledge regarding wildlife and offshore wind energy development, including ongoing efforts to understand, minimize, and mitigate environmental impacts; 2) promote regional coordination by sharing updates on research studies, guidelines development, and other efforts in the U.S. and elsewhere; and 3) promote collaboration through expert information exchange and discussion.

The workshop brought together 230 in-person and 216 virtual attendees. There were 12 sessions and symposia, including 51 oral presentations and 29 posters. Discussions focused on understanding wildlife populations and distributions, offshore wind development effects and species and ecosystem responses, minimization and mitigation approaches, cumulative impacts of

offshore wind development, and collaborative processes to improve conservation outcomes. All workshop sessions were recorded and are [publicly available on the E-TWG website](#). Many thanks to our planning committee, speakers, and all who participated!



Synthesis of Regional Research Priorities and Recommendations

The E-TWG is developing [interim guidance for regional-scale research and monitoring of offshore wind energy and wildlife in the eastern U.S.](#) This effort is being pursued via an expert workgroup made up of individuals from 19 organizations, with additional support from the Offshore Wind Synthesis of Environmental Effects Research ([SEER](#)) project team. The workgroup has met five times since late 2021 to develop two products to inform the allocation of funding for regional research:

1. Database of research needs and data gaps identified from existing sources, compiling and synthesizing existing data gaps and research needs so that researchers and funders can easily access, sort, and further prioritize topics.

2. Interim guidance for regional-scale research to complement the database, including definitions of common terminology to support regional communications, as well as general recommendations on study design and data transparency for regional-scale research efforts.

These products may be used by states, other government entities, offshore wind energy developers who are funding regional research and monitoring efforts, and the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) Subcommittees as they develop their Science Plan. Two virtual stakeholder meetings (including over 300 participants) were held in July and September 2022 to discuss how to prioritize regional-scale research and to obtain feedback on the draft database of research needs. Following additional opportunities for public feedback, the database will be published on the Tethys website.

Offshore Wind Webinar Library

After the E-TWG identified a need to improve sharing of information, NYSERDA developed a [library](#) of free, publicly available webinars related to offshore wind energy development and wildlife. Webinars are searchable and include a range of offshore wind and wildlife-focused topics.



Developing Guidance for Pre- and Post-Construction Monitoring

In collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the E-TWG is supporting development of [guidance for pre- and post-construction monitoring to detect macro-to meso-scale changes in avian distributions and habitat use in relation to offshore wind development](#). An expert Specialist Committee, made up of individuals from 16 organizations, is developing guidance to identify key displacement- and attraction-related questions and appropriate methodologies to address those questions, and to make recommendations for conducting observational surveys to detect offshore-wind related effects. This effort will:

- **Encourage consistency** in pre- and post-construction monitoring across projects,
- **Facilitate use of site-specific data** for regional-scale analyses,
- **Improve efficiency** and thus reduce costs,
- **Reduce duplicative efforts**,
- **Ensure generation of meaningful results**, and
- **Address knowledge gaps** to inform the broader understanding of potential cumulative impacts from offshore wind energy development.

There will be opportunities for broad input from stakeholders on draft products. If you are interested in learning more about these opportunities for input, please sign up for the [E-TWG mailing list](#).



Regional Updates

[The Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative \(RWSC\)](#), which launched in 2021, is developing an Integrated Science Plan for Offshore Wind and Wildlife. This plan will articulate the data collection and analysis activities needed for identifying, assessing, and avoiding impacts to wildlife from offshore wind development activities. The four sectors (federal agencies, state agencies, offshore wind energy developers, environmental non-governmental organizations) and scientific experts are supporting Science Plan development through several taxa-based Subcommittees. The E-TWG is continuing to work closely with and help support RWSC efforts to promote regional collaboration, fill data gaps, and coordinate research planning efforts.

In the last year, BOEM has proposed the first draft Wind Energy Areas in the [Gulf of Mexico](#), identified call areas for potential offshore wind development in the [central Atlantic](#) and off the coast of [Oregon](#), and issued a Request for Information to inform identification of call areas in the [Gulf of Maine](#). BOEM has also released a Proposed Sale Notice for auction of five lease areas off the coast of [California](#).

New York Phase 3 Offshore Wind Solicitation

In July 2022, [New York's third competitive offshore wind solicitation](#) was announced at the State of the Science Workshop. This solicitation will add at least 2 gigawatt (GW) of offshore wind to the state's existing portfolio of over 4.3 GW and is another step toward achieving the State's Climate Act mandate of at least 9 GW of offshore wind by 2035. As with the Phase 2 solicitation, New York State is requiring a range of environmental commitments from offshore wind energy developers selling power to the state, including \$10,000 per megawatt in funding for regional environmental and fisheries research.

Federal Activities in the New York Bight

In February 2022, BOEM held an offshore wind [auction](#) for six lease areas in the New York Bight with winning bids totaling approximately \$4.37 billion. BOEM will conduct a [regional environmental review](#) of these six lease areas, representing the first time BOEM has conducted a regional analysis with multiple lease areas. Additional project site-level environmental analyses will build off this programmatic review.

New York Bight Aerial Wildlife Surveys

The final reports from two aerial survey efforts have been released to inform offshore wind energy development in the New York Bight. Three years of [digital aerial surveys](#) were conducted on behalf of NYSERDA and three years of [visual aerial surveys](#) were conducted on behalf of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, respectively, to improve our understanding of baseline abundance and distributions of marine wildlife.

Regional Fisheries Updates

Given the close intersection of environmental and fisheries issues as they pertain to offshore wind development, this section provides brief updates on fisheries-related offshore wind initiatives. For additional updates, visit the Fisheries Technical Working Group (F-TWG) [website](#).

- The Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA), BOEM, National Marine Fisheries Service, Responsible Offshore Development Alliance, Tetra Tech, and NYSERDA sponsored an offshore wind symposium at the Annual American Fisheries Society meetings in late 2021 and 2022. Presentation, poster, and panel details can be found on the [ROSA website](#), and relevant presentations are also included in the [webinar library](#).
- For the past year, a group of regional coastal Atlantic states, BOEM, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have worked together to develop a standardized fisheries mitigation framework for offshore wind energy development. In June 2022, BOEM released [draft fisheries mitigation guidance](#) informed by public and stakeholder input, including many from the fishing industry. The need for fisheries compensation was identified as a key mitigation measure for the fishing industry.