

Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG)

Annual Bulletin

September 2021

E-TWG Meetings


The E-TWG met six times in the last year. Discussions focused on the prioritization of E-TWG efforts, New York's 2020 offshore wind procurement, and regional coordination. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were virtual.

Membership & Scope

In 2021, the geographic scope of the E-TWG expanded to include all areas of the U.S. East Coast with active development plans for offshore wind. An observer member joined from Maine. The E-TWG also welcomed a new advisory member from the National Audubon Society. Many thanks to outgoing members for their time spent on the E-TWG and a warm welcome to new representatives.

E-TWG Website

Visit the [E-TWG website](#) to learn more about the E-TWG's goals, keep up-to-date on group activities, and access offshore wind-related resources. Between July 2020 and August 2021, over 4000 visitors accessed the E-TWG site 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 800 people were directly involved with E-TWG activities, with particularly broad engagement via the 2020 State of the Science Workshop. Many 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 13 advisory member organizations, representing offshore wind developers and science-based non-governmental organizations, as well as 14 observer organizations from state and federal agencies. The group promotes regional coordination and collaboration, and provides input on how to advance offshore wind development in an environmentally responsible way.

E-TWG Priority-Setting

Over the last year, the E-TWG has evaluated how to use the E-TWG forum most effectively moving forward, and identified the topics on which the group should focus efforts in the next one to three years. This evaluation process included online surveys, interviews, and group discussions.

E-TWG members noted the group's value as a platform for joint discussion and coordination, and identified group priorities such as: 1) continued hosting of State of the Science Workshops, 2) improved coordination between states, 3) review and synthesis of data to inform stakeholder groups, 4) technology advancement for mitigation and monitoring, and 5) development of additional guidance for research and monitoring efforts at the regional and wind farm scales. NYSERDA and E-TWG support staff are working with E-TWG members, the Regional Wildlife Science Entity, and other stakeholders to determine the best approaches to address these priorities in 2021-2023.

2020 State of the Science Workshop on Wildlife and Offshore Wind Energy

Initially delayed due to the pandemic, the [State of the Science Workshop on Wildlife and Offshore Wind Energy 2020: Cumulative Impacts](#) took place virtually on November 16-20. The goals of the Workshop were to assess the state of knowledge regarding offshore wind development's cumulative effects on populations and ecosystems, and to identify key studies that could be conducted in the next 3-5 years to help improve our understanding of those effects as the offshore wind industry advances in the U.S. The workshop brought together more than 430 participants from 21 states and 20 countries. Workshop [presentations](#) included 23 plenary speakers and 20 lightning talks. Discussions focused on cumulative impact frameworks, current knowledge on different wildlife taxa, and hypothesized cumulative effects to wildlife from offshore wind energy development.

Identifying Research Needs

Following the November conference, workshop participants formed seven topic-specific [workgroups](#) focused on fishes and aquatic invertebrates, benthos, bats, birds, sea turtles, marine mammals, and environmental stratification. Workgroups met throughout early 2021 to identify priority studies that could be conducted in the U.S. in the next five years to support a better understanding of cumulative biological impacts from the offshore wind industry. Collectively, the workgroups represented over 200 scientific experts and other stakeholders. A final webinar was held in May 2021 to present group recommendations and discuss common themes. Workgroup reports and a recording of the webinar are available [here](#).

Summarizing Key Findings

Workshop proceedings are being drafted to summarize plenary presentations and the outcomes of the seven workgroups, and to synthesize research gaps and recommendations across groups. Proceedings are expected to be published later this year.

Mark your Calendars!

The State of the Science Workshop on Wildlife and Offshore Wind Energy 2022 is being planned for summer 2022. More details will be [available](#) later this year.



Bird and Bat Scientific Research Framework

Following a successful workshop convened by NYSERDA in March 2020, a small group of subject matter experts are working to develop a [scientific research framework](#) to guide the long-term study of potential impacts to birds and bats from offshore wind energy development in the eastern U.S. The goal of this framework is to help ensure that research and monitoring efforts are focused on key priorities and are appropriately designed to improve the state of knowledge. The workshop report is available [here](#) and the framework document is anticipated to be released in early 2022.



New York Offshore Wind Updates

Phase 2 Offshore Wind Procurement

NYSERDA's [second procurement](#) of offshore wind energy was provisionally awarded to Equinor's Empire Wind 2 and Beacon Wind projects. These projects will provide a combined total of 2,490 megawatts, and bring New York's total to five offshore wind projects in active development.

Passive Acoustic Monitoring Workshop

The Wildlife Conservation Society, with support from NYSERDA, held a [workshop](#) in October 2020 to explore opportunities for coordinated passive acoustic monitoring efforts for marine mammals in the New York Bight and mid-Atlantic region.

Power Grid and Submarine Cabling Reports

New York recently released several studies relating to energy distribution and transmission, including the [New York Power Grid Study](#) and the [Offshore Wind Submarine Cabling Report](#).

"Learning from the Experts" Webinar Series

NYSERDA's offshore wind webinar series, "[Learning from the Experts](#)," launched in March 2021 to connect the public with independent experts on topics such as wind farm technologies, development practices, regulatory processes, and research initiatives.

Federal Activities in the New York Bight

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) issued [Proposed Sale Notices](#) for eight leases for potential commercial wind development in the New York Bight.

Wildlife Data Standardization and Sharing

NYSERDA released a [report](#) to facilitate sharing of non-proprietary environmental data collected at offshore wind farms. The report includes a review of key wildlife-focused databases, database expansion efforts, and suggestions for improving data centralization and standardization.



Regional Updates

Massachusetts' Governor signed [climate change legislation](#) authorizing procurement of 2.4 GW of offshore wind power, bringing the state's total required authorization to 4 GW by 2027.

North Carolina's Governor signed an [Executive Order](#) establishing offshore wind goals of 2.8 GW by 2030 and 8 GW by 2040.

Maine's Governor's Energy Office announced its intent to apply for the country's first [floating offshore wind research array](#) in the Gulf of Maine.

The Regional Wildlife Science Entity (RWSE) is now being [administered and directed](#) by the Northeast Regional Ocean Council, Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, and Coastal States Stewardship Foundation. The E-TWG will work closely with the RWSE to promote regional collaboration and coordinate research and planning efforts.

BOEM [announced the final approval](#) of the first commercial-scale offshore wind project in the U.S., Vineyard Wind 1. The agency also advanced the permitting process for an additional seven offshore wind energy projects.

Regional Fisheries Updates

Given the close intersection of environmental and fisheries issues as they pertain to offshore wind, 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) recently published the [ROSA Offshore Wind Project Framework and Guidelines](#), building on BOEM's existing guidance, to inform the development of fisheries research and monitoring plans at commercial offshore wind farms.
- The [Fisheries and Offshore Wind Energy: Synthesis of the Science](#) project, consisting of a virtual workshop held in October 2020 and a forthcoming report, will advance ROSA's regional efforts by describing the current state of science, existing research and monitoring programs, and data gaps.
- NYSERDA's [Opportunity for Experienced Mariners Study](#) identifies additional job opportunities and training measures needed to capitalize on job creation from offshore wind development.