

**New York Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG)
Meeting Summary – 5 October 2020**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
Prepared by	Julia Gulka, Biodiversity Research Institute	10/07/2020
Reviewed by	Kate Williams, Biodiversity Research Institute	10/13/2020
Reviewed by	Bennett Brooks, Consensus Building Institute	10/14/2020
Reviewed by	Farrah Andersen, Cadmus	10/19/2020
Reviewed by	Kate McClellan Press, NYSERDA	10/19/2020
Revised by	Julia Gulka, Biodiversity Research Institute	10/20/2020

Disclaimer: While all efforts were made to accurately represent E-TWG discussions, the views expressed in this summary may not represent the views of all E-TWG members.

Background

As part of New York State's efforts to responsibly develop offshore wind energy, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) convened the Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG) in 2018 to provide input to the state on environmental topics¹. The ninth meeting of the E-TWG was held via video conference on 5 October, 2020. Nineteen E-TWG members participated in this meeting (Appendix A).

This meeting summary is intended to capture the key points of discussion and input from the E-TWG, as well as action items identified during the meeting. This summary is loosely organized according to the structure of the meeting agenda (Appendix B). Specific comments are organized by topical relevance, not necessarily the part of the agenda in which the comments were made. Opinions are not attributed to specific E-TWG members unless there is a clear reason to do so. For topics where there were differences of opinion among E-TWG members, this summary identifies areas of agreement as well as the different perspectives offered during meeting discussions.

Action Items

The following action items to advance E-TWG objectives were identified during the meeting:

- E-TWG members will provide any additional written feedback on workplan outlines via email to Kate Williams.
- NYSERDA and support staff will continue to refine the list of priorities and develop more detailed workplans, which will be sent to the E-TWG in the coming months along with solicitation for volunteers to be involved in different efforts.

E-TWG Priorities

Bennett Brooks (Consensus Building Institute) noted that the goal of the discussion during this meeting is to identify several priority topics which the E-TWG and support staff can pursue over the next 1.5-2 years. As mentioned previously, the E-TWG's priorities will inform NYSERDA's allocation of resources and effort moving forward.

Survey Results

Kate Williams (BRI) provided a summary of E-TWG member responses to an online prioritization survey in which respondents ranked potential topics in descending priority order. Ranks assigned to each topic by the 19 respondents were averaged across all responses. Given disparate response numbers per sector, ranks were also averaged within the government, industry, and NGO sectors, and the three sector means were averaged to create a sector-weighted mean value for each topic (Table 1). Using the survey results as guidance, support staff developed workplan outlines for six of the top seven topics by sector-weighted mean (Table 1). The seventh topic, "developing guidance for site-specific data standardization," is currently being discussed as a possible kickoff project for the Regional Wildlife Science Entity, and therefore has been temporarily shelved for further discussion as an E-TWG priority.

¹ For meeting agendas, summaries, and presentations, see: <http://nyetwg.com/>

Table 1. Mean ranks from survey responses (in order of descending priority for sector-weighted mean ranks). Lower values represent higher priority. Values in red are in the top 30% of mean values. The black box represents the top seven topics which were discussed further by the E-TWG.

	Mean Ranked Values				
	Overall	Sector-weighted	NGO	Dev.	Govt.
Design a regional monitoring program	6.58	5.97	4.2	8.2	5.5
Develop guidance for standardizing site-specific data	5.74	6.02	8.6	4.7	4.75
Develop guidance for site-specific monitoring plans	7.00	6.23	6.6	8.6	3.5
Organize State of the Science Workshops	5.74	6.55	5.8	4.1	9.75
Improve regional coordination with other regional groups	6.42	6.62	6.6	6.6	7.25
Design a field study to validate new technology for mitigation and monitoring	5.47	6.72	7.8	2.6	9.75
Support the review and synthesis of data to inform stakeholder groups	5.95	7.02	6.6	3.7	10.75
Coordinate state requirements for offshore wind energy development	8.95	8.25	8	10.5	6.25
Develop standards for technology deployment offshore	7.74	8.58	11.6	5.4	8.75
Develop a mechanism or framework for compensatory mitigation	9.89	9.53	10	10.6	8
Develop best management practices for marine mammals and sea turtles	11.53	9.88	7.4	15.5	6.75
Oversee a study to better understand cumulative impacts	10.63	10.18	7.2	12.1	11.25
Inform stakeholders about technologies for monitoring and mitigation	9.58	10.42	13.8	7.2	10.25
Develop best management practices for birds and bats	11.89	10.63	9.6	14.8	7.5
Improve vessel communications and coordination	10.63	10.78	9.6	10.5	12.25
Facilitate coordination and improvements to the regulatory process	12.26	12.62	12.6	11.5	13.75

Workplan Outlines

E-TWG support staff developed six workplan outlines to help define each priority topic’s objectives, timeline, process, end products, E-TWG role, and additional resource requirements, in order to inform further discussions. Workplan outlines were distributed prior to the meeting. In light of previous E-TWG feedback regarding time commitment and resource needs, NYSERDA and E-TWG support staff expect it unlikely that the E-TWG will be able to successfully pursue all six topics in the next 1-2 years. As such, the remainder of the meeting focused on refining potential priorities and discussing their relative importance to E-TWG members. For each of the following topics, Kate Williams (BRI) provided a brief summary of the workplan outline and then Bennett solicited discussion from E-TWG members. Kate noted that several of the topics were rescoped slightly from the phrasing used in the online survey.

Topic 1: Improve State Coordination

Kate McClellan Press (NYSERDA) has begun coordinating with other regional state agencies, including state representatives on the E-TWG and others involved in offshore wind and wildlife. There was an initial call amongst this group in September, where it was decided that the following would be pursued:

1. Development of an email contact list of individuals from state agency working on offshore wind and wildlife that will be kept up to date over time.
2. Use of the contact list to enable informal relevant updates among states.
3. Setting up regularly scheduled or ad hoc calls with this group to discuss specific topics such as mitigation plans, or other topics of interest for state members.

The aims of this process are to better communicate among states on offshore wind and environmental issues, reduce redundancy for stakeholders involved in multiple groups, and keep stakeholders better informed.

Discussion

E-TWG members expressed that this priority topic would help meet a key need and result in improved efficiencies. It was acknowledged that while the E-TWG and NYSERDA can commit to coordination, there may be varying appetites from other groups to collaborate. Specific suggestions included:

- Ensuring that this communication network provides updates back to the E-TWG, as well as an opportunity for developers to share information, such as monitoring plans or project updates.
- Recognize potential for coordination with E-TWG specialist committees, particularly when the focus is the development of regionally relevant products.
- Change language in the workplan outline from “ensuring” alignment among states to “improving” alignment.

Topic 2: Develop Guidance for Regional Monitoring

The aim of this effort would be to develop guidance that could (1) help direct the use of funding for regional monitoring that is required of developers under the New York Phase 2 procurement, and possibly also the New Jersey procurement if there is interest in multi-state coordination, and (2) be transferred to and further developed by the RWSE in the future. Currently the Regional Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) is developing similar guidance for regional fisheries monitoring, with a draft to be made public shortly. This effort could use the fisheries guidance as a model to develop an environmental regional monitoring guidance document. This effort would require regular input from an E-TWG specialist committee for a finite period of time (~6 months), with a need for additional resources for the development of the document.

Discussion

Multiple E-TWG members expressed that the workplan meets both immediate needs for New York and longer-term RWSE needs, and is an important topic on which to focus efforts while the RWSE is still being established. There was recognition that coordination between New York and New Jersey on this topic would be beneficial and that there is potential appetite for such coordination. Other discussion focused on:

- Scope of the guidance document. If the goal is for the document to be applicable across taxa, it may require sections specific to different resources. It would also be possible to narrow the scope if needed.
- Specialist Committee structure. The membership of the specialist committee guiding the development of the document would ideally include some E-TWG members but should also have other experts, particularly scientists with regional monitoring expertise, and should also engage the RWSE coordinating group.

Topic 3: Develop Guidance for Site-specific Monitoring

Developing guidance for site-specific monitoring at offshore wind projects would need to be coordinated with any efforts to develop regional guidance, as there is potential overlap. The aim would be to ensure consistency in site-specific monitoring across projects, such that resulting data address

gaps in knowledge and inform a broader understanding of impacts. The initial effort would be focused on specific taxa or topic areas, and could then be expanded. Possible end products include: 1) pre-construction monitoring guidance to define when pre-existing data is sufficient versus when additional data collection efforts are needed, 2) a set of standards, 3) a list of overall priority questions for site-specific monitoring, divided by region if needed, and/or 4) criteria or a decision tree to identify the most appropriate questions for specific sites and the methods to address those questions. There is recognition that there is potential to overlap with BOEM's authority, particularly in relation to pre-construction monitoring and site assessment.

Discussion

E-TWG members expressed support for this effort, and in particular noted (1) the likely benefit of a criteria/decision tree that provides options based on species of interest as well as available methods and technologies, and (2) that this type of guidance could be useful for BOEM and allow for information sharing among developers.

- It would be important to keep guidance broad to ensure applicability across sites. Guidance could be presented as a series of options used to guide the development of monitoring plans, and possibly focus on specific methods, techniques, and technologies rather than the specifics of what should be included in an individual monitoring plan.
- Regarding terminology, "standards" can be viewed as requirements, whereas the intention for this topic is more on developing "guidance."
- It may be beneficial to consider including procedural guidance on how site-specific monitoring plans are written and reviewed.
- The group should consider, given data standardization efforts that BOEM may choose to fund via the RWSE, how these two efforts might be sequenced or integrated.

Topic 4: Advance Technology for Monitoring and Mitigation

It can be difficult for developers, federal and state agencies, and other stakeholders to understand the deployment capabilities and limitations of various wildlife monitoring and mitigation technologies. Support staff developed this initial outline with an inclusive scope, including to: 1) build off of the MMP Tool to include additional information about different existing technologies, including technology readiness level (TRL) and status for deployment, 2) identify performance and assessment standards, and 3) design a field study to validate a particular technology. The timeline and resource needs for this effort would vary depending on which of these goals were pursued; it would be overseen by a specialist committee.

Discussion

- Advancing technologies that hold promise could inform site-specific and regional monitoring plans and thus feed into other priorities.
- E-TWG members indicated that a good first step would be to focus efforts on the first goal of a desktop study reviewing different technologies.
- Incorporating webinars on technologies' capabilities and limitations could help to foster discussion on this topic. This could include third party experts or presentations directly from technology companies/vendors.

- Efforts would need to be coordinated with the Department of Energy and/or the National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium to avoid duplication of effort.
- It was recognized in order for resources like the MMP Tool to remain useful, there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that they are regularly updated.

Topic 5: Review and Synthesize Data to Inform Stakeholders

To help inform stakeholders that provide input on offshore wind energy and wildlife issues, either informally or via public comment periods, it would be beneficial to improve understanding of existing data and uses of that data. The scope of this effort could include a review of existing environmental datasets and creation of a matrix that summarizes available data and how those data can be used to answer different questions. This could be followed by the production of communications materials such as webinars, fact sheets, and/or presentations at workshops to inform the broader stakeholder community about data collection efforts and their utility.

Discussion

- It was suggested that the outline clarify the intended focus on regional- and state-scale data rather than site-specific data.
- Some E-TWG members suggested that the review and synthesis of data to inform stakeholders did not feel like a good fit for the E-TWG, particularly as DOE is also working in this space. However, other E-TWG members expressed interest in this topic, particularly as it relates to data collected by state agencies, and potential connections with the State of the Science workshops and the NYSERDA webinar series. It was generally agreed that the value of this priority relates to the specificity of the scope.

Topic 6: State of the Science Workshops

The second State of the Science Workshop on Offshore Wind and Wildlife will be held in November 2020, and will be focused on cumulative impacts. Based on previous discussions with the E-TWG, the aim for future workshops is to alternate between topically-focused meetings and broader updates on the state of knowledge.

General Discussion

Following discussions on potential priority topics, above, the group spent some time thinking more holistically about which topics should be pursued, recognizing that NYSERDA has already expressed support for continuing the State of the Science Workshops and improving state coordination.

- There was recognition that all of the topics outlined have value to stakeholders, and in some cases, like birds, all of the priority topics are related, making it difficult to identify which are higher or lower priority.
- Given the importance of the connection between regional and site-specific guidance, it was suggested that it may be a missed opportunity to pursue one of these two topics without the other. There was also recognized value in developing a regional monitoring framework to coincide with the ROSA fisheries effort.
- It was noted that clear mapping out of milestones and deliverables across topics will be needed to ensure that the group is embarking on an achievable set of efforts.

- When asked to choose their top topic for advancement through an informal poll (among Topics 2-5 as listed above), most E-TWG members indicated either guidance on regional monitoring or technology advancement.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

E-TWG input to date will inform NYSERDA's decisions regarding allocation of resources moving forward. Support staff and NYSERDA will continue to refine the list of priority topics and develop detailed workplans. Once these next steps have been identified, support staff will distribute these plans to the E-TWG for review and solicit volunteers to work on different topics, with the aim of beginning efforts in Winter 2020-2021.

Upcoming Timeline

- The State of the Science Workshop on Offshore Wind and Wildlife is November 16-20. Register on the E-TWG website: <http://nyetwg.com/2020-workshop>
- The next Environmental Mitigation Plan meetings for the Sunrise Wind and Empire Wind projects will occur in late 2020/early 2021
- The next E-TWG meeting is TBD but likely in early 2021. Support staff will follow up via email.

Appendix A: List of Participants

Point of Contact	Organization	Stakeholder Type	Role
<i>Kate McClellan Press</i>	<i>NYSERDA</i>	<i>State Government</i>	<i>Convener/chair</i>
Anthony Bevacqua	NJ Board of Public Utilities	State Government	Observer
Catherine Bowes	National Wildlife Federation	eNGO	Advisor
Koen Broker	Shell New Energies	Developer	Advisor
Megan Brunatti	NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection	State Government	Observer
Lisa Engler	MA Dept. of State	State Government	Observer
Michael Evans	Ørsted	Developer	Advisor
Elizabeth Gowell	Ørsted	Developer	Advisor
Sheryll Huber-Jones	NY Dept. of Conservation	State Government	Observer
Shannon Kearney	CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection	State Government	Observer
Francine Kershaw	Natural Resources Defense Council	eNGO	Advisor
Jillian Liner	Audubon New York	eNGO	Advisor
Carl LoBue	The Nature Conservancy	eNGO	Advisor
Joe Martens	NY Offshore Wind Alliance	Nonpartisan NGO	Advisor
Catherine McCall	MD Dept. of Natural Resources	State Government	Observer
Laura Morales	Equinor Wind US	Developer	Advisor
Paul Phifer	Atlantic Shores	Developer	Advisor
Matt Robertson	Vineyard Wind	Developer	Advisor
Howard Rosenbaum	Wildlife Conservation Society	eNGO	Advisor
Brandi Sangunett	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management	Federal Government	Observer

Support Staff present

Farrah Andersen (Cadmus Group)

Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA)

Bennett Brooks (Consensus Building Institute)

Julia Gulka (Biodiversity Research Institute)

Edward Jenkins (Biodiversity Research Institute)

Kate Williams (Biodiversity Research Institute)

Appendix B: Meeting Agenda

New York Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG)

2:00-3:30 pm EDT, 5 October 2020

Meeting objectives:

- Discuss poll results and identify E-TWG priorities
- Discuss approaches for top priorities

<u>Time</u>	<u>Agenda Item</u>
2:00-2:10	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoom orientation• Meeting agenda & ground rules
2:10-3:25	E-TWG Priorities Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey results• Workplan outlines• Discussion
3:25-3:30	Wrap Up & Next Steps