

Northeast Regional Ocean Council

Ocean Planning Committee

May 28, 2020 Webinar Summary

Introduction

On May 28, 2020, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) Ocean Planning Committee (OPC) held the second in a series of webinars in lieu of a scheduled in-person meeting that was cancelled due to the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. This document includes the webinar agenda, links to the presentations for each agenda topic, a summary of the discussion for each topic (if there was one), and a list of the over 150 webinar registrants. The intent of the original in-person meeting was to obtain an update and information about the various offshore management, planning, and regulatory considerations over the next several years, and to consider additional information needs and the opportunities for NROC and its partners to provide support or information as each effort moves forward. The May 28 webinar focused on state planning efforts and the New England Fishery Management Council and their policies for cables, offshore wind, aquaculture, and other activities. The May 28 webinar was [recorded](#). It will be followed by additional webinars covering additional offshore topics.

OPC Co-Chair Update

The meeting began with an update from the NROC OPC Co-Chairs. Presentation slides can be viewed [here](#). Federal Co-Chair Chris Boelke provided a brief overview of recent NROC OPC outreach and engagement activities including specific outreach related to updating different data themes on the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, and the Best Practices Work Group. Chris also noted that the NROC OPC is planning potential webinars about grid and transmission planning, aquaculture, and wildlife and habitat research related to offshore wind, and opened a poll for webinar participants to provide feedback on what ocean planning topics they would like to see NROC address. The poll remained open for the duration of the webinar and answers were collected anonymously. See Appendix III for the responses.

New England Fishery Management Council

Michelle Bachman and Tom Nies of the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) provided an update on Council activities that involve sharing spatial data via the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and other platforms to support the development and review of frameworks and habitat policies. Michelle's presentation can be found [here](#).

Discussion and Responses to Questions

Michelle responded to questions about the development of NEFMC Habitat Policies related to offshore wind, cables, and aquaculture. Michelle responded that these policies are being developed in accordance with the Council's work priorities for 2020, with collaboration from topic area experts within the Council's Habitat Plan Development Team. Additional subject matter experts (e.g., from state fisheries agencies) will be engaged to provide input on best practices as the policies are drafted. Chris Boelke (NROC Federal Co-Chair, NOAA Fisheries) commented that the NROC OPC Best Practices Work

Group could leverage the Council's work on these policies as they seek to integrate lessons learned related to interagency coordination and decision-making. Michelle also responded to a question about the Council's input on cable burial/armoring and noted that the Council has and will continue to engage with BOEM and developers during the project planning phases to discuss concerns about dynamic seabeds, sand waves, and negative fisheries interactions.

Long Island Sound Blue Plan

David Blatt of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and Christian Fox from The Nature Conservancy provided an update on the status of the Long Island Sound Blue Plan and described how other ocean planning data products and processes in the region, including data from the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, contributed to Blue Plan development. David's and Christian's presentation can be found [here](#).

Discussion and Responses to Questions

David responded to questions on the following topics during the webinar:

Blue Plan study area: In response to a question about why the Blue Plan excluded coastal bays and other nearshore areas, David replied that although there was a lot of local interest in the management of nearshore areas, CT DEEP opted to focus on offshore areas in order to avoid creating confusion around the existing authorities in these areas (e.g., state-level permitting activities, harbor management, private marinas, beach clubs, etc.).

Aquaculture: David responded to a question about whether the Blue Plan addresses aquaculture and described it as one of the significant human uses identified in the Plan. Additionally, "Managed Shellfish Beds" (aquaculture and recreational areas) are included in the Significant Ecological Areas for the ecosystem services they provide.

The following additional questions were asked but not answered during the webinar due to time:

- *Did you consider collaboration with NY to create a comprehensive plan for the entire LIS?*

Yes. Initial working groups and discussions included representatives from NYS agencies, NGOs and academics. CT participants concluded that we needed statutory authorization for LIS MSP, so the Blue Plan statute necessarily applies only to CT, although it required CT DEEP to coordinate with NYS to the maximum extent. To that end, NY DOS and DEC were invited to participate in the Blue Plan Advisory Committee and occasionally did, although they have not done so for the past year or so. Nonetheless, Blue Plan data spans the entire Sound equally and comprehensively and is readily available for anyone in New York. Every SHUA and ESA is composed of the best available data for both CT and NY.

- *How often will the Blue Plan be updated and how is it funded?*

Under the statute, it must be updated no later than every five years and changes re-approved by the legislature. Data layers will be updated more frequently than that, and the Advisory Committee will continue to meet quarterly. The Blue Plan has received no state funding beyond the contributions of existing staff, but partners TNC and CT Sea Grant have received grants from funders such as the Moore Foundation and the Long Island Sound Study.

- *Did CT DEEP or other agencies have to incorporate new provisions in existing CT regulatory programs to implement the Blue Plan, and if so, what were the most significant changes?*

Once approved by the legislature, the Blue Plan policies will guide the implementation of existing regulatory authorities. Any changes to these programs will be minimal; e.g., changing the wording on a form to help applicants get the most out of the Blue Plan.

Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan

Lisa Berry Engler, Director of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM), provided an update on the status of the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan and described how other ocean planning data products and processes in the region, including data from the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, contributed Plan development. Lisa's presentation can be found [here](#).

Discussion and Responses to Questions

Lisa answered a question about how decision-making has been impacted by the MA Ocean Management Plan. She replied with an example of a trans-Atlantic cable that was proposed to traverse MA state waters. The state required the developer to review the Special, Sensitive, and Unique areas identified in the MA Ocean Plan and discuss ways to avoid the sensitive habitats.

The following additional questions were asked but not answered during the webinar due to time:

- *Are there any energy development proposals for the renewable energy areas?*
- *Could you explain the input you and your agency had in the recent agreement between MA and Vineyard Wind on mitigation and compensation?*
- *Can you describe in more detail how you evaluate the performance of the Ocean Management Plan?*
- *Could you talk about the draft Section 309 Assessment and Five Year Strategy for CZM Program Enhancement that MA just released and whether it may change the state's administration of the Ocean Plan?*

Rhode Island Ocean and Bay Special Area Management Plans

Grover Fugate, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), provided an overview of the Ocean and Bay Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) development process, and how RI is amending those plans and implementing them with respect to impacts of offshore activities such as cable burial, noise, and electromagnetic fields. There were no slides accompanying Grover's presentation. A summary of his presentation is below:

- History and context for RI Special Area Management Plan (SAMP)
 - RI has had a marine spatial plan since 1983
 - State waters have been zoned into various use categories
 - Within these categories, there are acceptable uses and not-acceptable uses
 - There are also performance standards for each of the uses within the categories that are permitted
 - In 2010, the Ocean SAMP was adopted from the mouth of the bay to 30 mi offshore, encompassing both state and federal waters with separate policy areas for each
 - The Ocean SAMP provides for habitat and fisheries advisory committees that have roles providing advice to CRMC; developers are required to meet with both committees

- The Block Island project is within the renewable energy zone in state waters and needed to meet the use standards for that zone. Project and permitting hearings took 9 months.
- There have been proposed renewable energy projects (notably Vineyard Wind) outside of the designated zones and outside the initial RI GLD.
 - Vineyard Wind voluntarily submitted to RI and RI reviewed the project
 - After contentious meetings, the CRMC granted consistency review, with Vineyard compensating fishermen as part of that agreement
- After this experience, RI wanted to strengthen their position related to offshore development
 - RI amended their GLD to encompass additional areas valuable to RI fisheries (note that the Coastal Zone Management Act references fisheries activities, not fish resources)
 - Other SAMP updates/considerations were added, including
 - New language around cables
 - Mattresses are potentially hazardous to dredge fisheries
 - No pre-existing language minimizing use of mattresses
 - Within state waters, a series of amendments was created to strengthen regulatory program address cable routes inside the bay
 - Noise considerations
 - Pre-construction noise during geophysical and geotechnical work
 - Lack of data around monopile construction noise effects
 - Operational noise associated with maintenance and operation
 - Electromagnetic Fields
 - Studies indicate that there is a more obvious impact from DC currents compared to AC currents
 - DC currents may be more common in the future
 - Importance of establishing an accurate baseline to assess impacts before construction
 - Turbine grid layout
 - Addressed to meet fishery needs, though some transit route issues still disputed by fishing industry
 - Looking to designate pre-defined corridors to streamline permitting, in collaboration with renewable companies
 - Company concerns were also included, citing federal preemption of state standards
 - Issues without objection were included within the revised SAMP and disputed issues may be addressed through future amendments to the plan

Discussion and Responses to Questions

Grover responded to a question about the development and amendment of Rhode Island's Geographic Location Description (GLD). Grover described that the decisions to develop and amend the GLD were related to providing the state with enhanced ability to exercise its authorities within the federal consistency review process under the Coastal Zone Management Act. The GLD gives the state the ability to review proposed offshore energy projects and any potential impacts on fisheries activities outside of state waters that directly impact RI fishermen, and also enhances the ability of the state to negotiate mitigation of those impacts.

Appendix I

Northeast Regional Ocean Council Ocean Planning Committee Webinar May 28, 2020, 10:00 – 12:00

The Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) Ocean Planning Committee (OPC) was originally scheduled to hold an in-person meeting on April 2, 2020. Due to recent events, the NROC OPC decided instead to hold a series of webinars starting on April 2 and including this webinar on May 28. This agenda includes many of the topics that were originally planned to be covered in-person on April 2. The NROC OPC will be scheduling additional webinars in the coming months to cover other topics that were originally on the agenda for the in-person meeting on April 2, including opportunities to go into more detail about grid and transmission planning, aquaculture, and wildlife and habitat research and data development related to offshore wind.

Webinar Registration and Materials

Please register in advance of the webinar via this link:

<https://neoceanplanning.my.webex.com/neoceanplanning.my/j.php?RGID=r18b8a76ca1a9db48e2f14e1202e0bbba>

Webinar materials including this agenda will be posted at this URL on the Northeast Ocean Planning website: <https://neoceanplanning.org/news/nroc-ocean-planning-committee-may-28-webinar/>

Webinar Objectives

- Obtain an update on the status of state-led marine planning efforts in the region and from the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC). This will include state and NEFMC policies related to transmission cables, aquaculture, offshore wind, and other activities.
- Consider the use of the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and the best practices identified in the Northeast Ocean Plan, and identify potential opportunities and priorities for continued improvement and coordination with NROC.

Agenda

10:00

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review, Co-Chair Update

*Chris Boelke, NROC Ocean Planning Committee Federal Co-Chair
New England Branch Chief, Habitat Conservation Division, NOAA Fisheries*

*Ted Diers, NROC Ocean Planning Committee State Co-Chair
Administrator of the Watershed Bureau of the New Hampshire Department of
Environmental Services*

10:10

New England Fishery Management Council

Tom Nies, New England Fishery Management Council

Michelle Bachman, New England Fishery Management Council

Relevant Links:

NEFMC Offshore Development Policies: <http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/Council-policies-on-offshore-wind-and-oil-adopted-June-2018.pdf>

Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/omnibus-habitat-amendment-2>

Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/omnibus-deep-sea-coral-amendment>

Clam Dredge Framework: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/clam-dredge-framework>

Fishing Effects Model: <https://www.nefmc.org/library/fishing-effects-model>

10:35

Long Island Sound Blue Plan

David Blatt, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Christian Fox, The Nature Conservancy

Relevant Links:

Blue Plan Home Page: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/LIS-Blue-Plan/Long-Island-Sound-Blue-Plan-Home>

Blue Plan Map Viewer: <http://cteco.uconn.edu/projects/blueplan/index.htm>

11:00

Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan

Lisa Engler, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management

Relevant Links:

MA Ocean Management Plan Home Page: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-ocean-management-plan>

MA Ocean Management Plan Data:

http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map_ol/mass_ocean_plan.php

11:25

Rhode Island Ocean and Bay Special Area Management Plans

Grover Fugate, RI Coastal Resources Management Council

Relevant Link: Ocean SAMP: http://www.crmc.ri.gov/samp_ocean.html

12:00pm

Adjourn

Appendix II: NROC Ocean Planning Committee May 28 Webinar - Registered Participants

Name	Organization
Abigail Archer	Woods Hole Sea Grant
Adelaine McCloe	Connecticut department of Environmental Protection
Alison Chase	NRDC
Allison Castellan	NOAA Office for Coastal Management
Allison Lorenc	Conservation Law Foundation
Amie West	UMCES
Andrea Carpenter	NAVSEA
Ann Pembroke	Normandeau Associates
Anna Serdynska	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Annie Hawkins	RODA
Artie Kopelman	Coastal Research & Education Society of Long Island, Inc.
Becca Newhall	NOAA's Office for Coastal Management
Becky Love	NOAA OCM
Ben Haskell	NOAA/Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
Betsy Nicholson	NOAA Office for Coastal Management
Beverly Flowers	DEEP
Bill Hubbard	Massachusetts Maritime Academy
Brenda Rashleigh	US EPA
Brent Greenfield	National Ocean Policy Coalition
Brian Hooker	BOEM
Brian Thompson	CTDEEP
Caleb Spiegel	USFWS
Caroline Filmer	CT DEEP
Carrie Schmaus	US DOE
Catalina Gomez	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Celina Cunningham	Governor's Energy Office
Chris Williams	New Hampshire Coastal Program
Chris Dwyer	USFWS
Chris Hilke	National Wildlife Federation
Christian Fox	The Nature Conservancy in Connecticut
Christine Hirt	National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium
Christopher McGuire	The Nature Conservancy
Colin Clark	CT DEEP
Corrie Curtice	Duke University
Dana Goodson	Udall Foundation
Dani Boudreau	NOAA
Darryl Francois	BOEM
David Blatt	Connecticut Coastal Management Program (DEEP LWRD)
David Ciochetto	Rhode Island and Providence Coastal Resources Management Council
David Kaiser	NOAA Office for Coastal Management
David Wong	MassDEP
Debra Palka	NOAA Fisheries, Northeast Fisheries Science Center
Doug Bogen	Seacoast Anti-Pollution League
Doug Christel	National Marine Fisheries Service
Eimy Quispe	CT DEEP
Elise Leduc	Woods Hole Group
Emily Alexander	CT League of Conservation Voters
Emily Hall	Seatuck Environmental Association
Emily Hildreth	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Erica Felins	U.S. Navy
Fiona Hogan	RODA
Gayle Zydlewski	University of Maine
George Lapointe	George Lapointe Consulting
Glen Herbert	Marine Planning & Conservation, Fisheries & Oceans Canada
Grace Roskar	NOAA Sea Grant
Grover Fugate	CRMC State of Rhode Island
Heather Hopkins	Department of the Navy
Helen Henderson	American Littoral Society
Ivy Mlsna	US EPA
Jackie LeClair	USEPA
Jake Kritzer	Environmental Defense Fund
Jeff Willis	RI Coastal Resources Management Council
Jeffrey Flumignan	Maritime Administration
Jeffrey Nield	EDR
Jennie Rheuban	WHOI
Jennifer Couture	NEFMC
Jennifer Ewald	BOEM
Jennifer Felt	Conservation Law Foundation
Jennifer Mccann	URI
Jennifer Sheehy	US Coast Guard
Jerry Keefe	US EPA - Laboratory Services and Applied Science Div.
Jesse Cleary	Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Duke University
Jessica Redfern	New England Aquarium
Jim Bennett	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Joan LeBlanc	NROC
Jocelyn Runnebaum	The Nature Conservancy

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Name	Organization
Joelle Gore	NOAA Office for Coastal Management
John Duane	Down Cape Realty
John Kraeuter	Univ.New England
Justin Trueman	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Karen Bradbury	U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Karen Michaels	CT DEEP
Kathryn Ford	Mass Division of Marine Fisheries
Kathryn Sommo	Roux Associates, Inc.
Kevin Madley	NOAA NMFS
Kevin O'Brien	CT Dept of Energy & Environmental Protection
Kevin Staples	NROC OPC
Kim Czaplá	State of Connecticut, Department of Energy and Environmental Pro
Kristin Uiterwyk	Urban Harbors Institute
Lane Johnston	RODA
Leann Bullin	BOEM
Lindsay Hirt	Captain John Boats
Lindsey Williams	Independent Consultant
Lisa Engler	MA CZM
Lisa Wise	NH Sea Grant Extension
Lori Watson	Michael Baker International
Maggie Wheeler	Anchor QEA
Marcia Hart	self
Marcia Wilkins	CT Sierra Club
Marcy Balint	CT DEEP
Margaret (Peg) Brady	NOAA Fisheries
Marianne Ferguson	NMFS
Marisa Guarinello	INSPIRE Environmental
Mark Tedesco	USEPA
Mary Anne Morrison	Navy
Mary Ellen Hawkins	Coastal Resources Center
Matthew Charette	Woods Hole Sea Grant
Maureen Hayes	CLIA
Max Westhead	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Melissa Batum	BOEM Office of Renewable Energy Programs
Melissa Gates	Surfrider Foundation
Melville Cote	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Michaela Garland	Southern Connecticut State University
Michele Desautels	USCG
Michelle Bachman	New England Fishery Mgmt Council
Monica Pepe	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Naomi Lewandowski	Department of Energy
Nat Trumbull	Univ. of Connecticut
Onni Irish	SubCom
Pam Loring	USFWS Migratory Birds
Patricia Sullivan	Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists SEAS
Paula Kullberg	US Army Corps of Engineers - New England
Paula Kullberg	US Army Corps of Engineers - New England
Peter Auster	UConn & Mystic Aquarium
Peter Taylor	Waterview Consulting
Porter Hoagland	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Prassede Vella	MA Office of Coastal Zone Management
Rafeed Hussain	Ocean Conservancy
Rhianna Bozzi	NYSDEC
Robert LaBelle	LaBelle & Assoc.
Sally McGee	Nature Conservancy
Scott Coffen-Smout	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Shannon Kearney	State of CT- DEEP
Sherryl Jones	NYSDEC
Stephen Dickson	Maine Geological Survey
Steve Wolf	USACE
Steven Couture	NHDES
Sue Jacobson	CTDEEP
Susan Farady	University of New England
Susan Herz	EDR
Susan Sullivan	NEIWPC
Suzanne Garrett	Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Talya ten Brink	NOAA Fisheries
Thomas Nies	New England Fishery Management Council
Timothy Timmermann	EPA Region 1
Todd Burrowes	Maine Coastal Program
Tom Shyka	NERACCOOS
Tony MacDonald	Monmouth Urban Coast Institute
Wendy Williams	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
William Cavers	Conservation Law Foundation
Zach Jylkka	NOAA Fisheries

Appendix III: NROC Ocean Planning Committee May 28 2020 Webinar Poll Results

What ocean planning topics would you like to see NROC address?

- Aquaculture
- Marine protected area management
- Near and longtime impacts on ocean planning from COVID-19
- Use of planning processes and coordination to better align and coordinate research agendas, research funding, and the dissemination of findings across the region (both natural and social sciences).
- Mapping
- Competition over space between ocean users. This includes not only offshore energy and fishing, but conflicts between fixed and mobile fishing gear, fixed gear and maritime transportation, ocean mining activities for sand etc. and other users, cable right of ways, etc.
- Advancements on Best Practices specifically using offshore wind as a frame. Additional work building out ocean data portal. Emphasis on improved, early, robust stakeholder engagement.
- Offshore wind, data portal maintenance and use, bridge fisheries and other uses, responses to climate change (sediment management, sea level rise, temperature change, range changes in protected species and industries)
- The future of ocean energy - what is coming AFTER offshore wind? I would also be curious to see where fish population studies are happening or have happened in tributaries and estuaries within this area. Am curious to see knowledge gaps.
- Offshore Wind Development
- More involvement/leadership in efforts to integrate state-federal efforts to minimize impacts of offshore wind on wildlife (including cumulative impacts of multiple facilities)
- I suggest NROC address the issue of conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity as a planning issue that transcends the scope of human uses of the regional sea. This could identify stakeholder specific issues, application of existing data/information, and perhaps most important, identify data/information gaps that will need to be addressed. Right now, some/much depends on implicit assumptions that have limited evidence.
- Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary just started their management plan process, close connection with NROC would be beneficial as they develop their plan and the role of a Sanctuary in the larger GOM area and other activities/planning could be beneficial.
- Multi-use strategies
- Contributions from Citizen Science - methods and process.