

# Seafloor Habitat Data Work Group Update - June 2021

## Refresher and description of INSPIRE/NROC Project Outputs:

The outputs below represent a workflow that will be tested through the pilot project with INSPIRE and NROC. In conversations since the January 22 kickoff meeting, we asked Work Group members if this pilot project workflow is viable, and if it is realistic to repeat and build on this workflow into the future as data are collected. There was broad agreement that this pilot project presents an opportunity to understand the available data, establish relationships for longer-term sharing, and recommend a workflow to be iterated and implemented in the future.

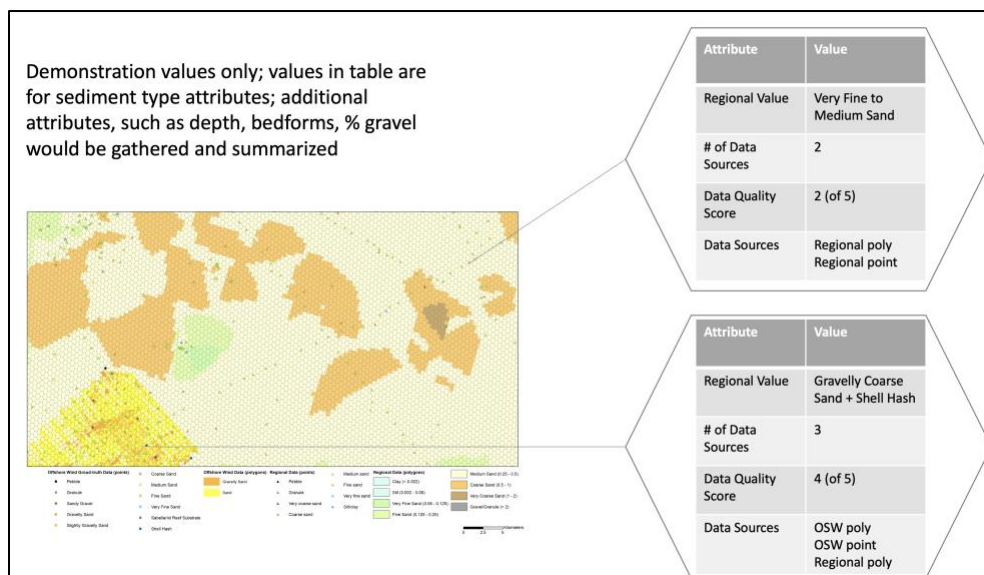
### Project Output 1: Standard data request for a set of specific habitat data products relative to site characterization

This output refers to a list of habitat variables, filetypes, and resolutions that would be included in a request to entities collecting seafloor habitat data. This output assumes that data collectors are using methods and approaches in a consistent fashion to obtain, interpret, classify, and map data. Work Group members have indicated that this assumption has not held true in the past for the existing data throughout the region that have been used to build current regional habitat products. A subset of the Work Group with familiarity with applying CMECS could help address this issue with further discussion and consideration of ongoing CMECS implementation guidance. This project will document best practices applied in the development of pilot project products (e.g., discussions with the Work Group on thresholds, data types that do not yield useful information for habitat mapping such as vibracores).

### Project Output 2: Improved understanding of habitat distributions across the region

### Project Output 3: Use Northeast Ocean Data Portal to disseminate standard set of intermediate scale regional habitat composites that improve upon current region-scale data; possibly pilot a system to provide password-protected access to higher resolution underlying data

These outputs refer to improved regional scale data products derived from the data requested and obtained via Project Output 1. A conceptual mockup of a regional scale data product and how it could be queried via Portal tools is shown below.



### How could these Outputs be used?

- *Future planning and siting, that may include offshore wind but also aquaculture, submarine cables and pipelines, sand extraction, dredged material disposal, artificial reefs etc.*
- *Assessing cumulative impacts and monitoring*
- *Identifying data gaps; responding to frequent federal requests to prioritize areas within the region for future mapping and characterization*
- *Inform communication/public awareness around offshore wind projects*
- *Could pilot password-protected access to higher-resolution underlying data from the developers*
- *If timely, data products could be used for regulatory review of future projects, but note that regional-scale products cannot replace or negate the need for project-specific data*

### **Project Status:**

Following the January 22 Work Group kickoff meeting, the project team met individually with representatives of each offshore wind company to hear their direct feedback on the project's potential outputs. Subsequently, NROC convened Work Group members from just state agencies, federal agencies, and the fishery management council to provide a status update for the project and hear feedback. The following points capture the major discussion themes.

### **Highlights common to conversations with both developers and agencies:**

- All are supportive of the three project outputs
- All highlighted an interest in, and the importance of, data sharing and contributing to a regional understanding of habitat
- Greater understanding of regional habitat gives greater certainty (lower risk) in development and review processes
- Consider how these data could be used for other planning/management issues besides offshore wind, e.g., sand resource assessment, aquaculture, paleoarchaeological resources
- Consider developing data quality/data density/confidence metrics to help evaluate whether additional data are needed to support a regional interpretation

### **Highlights from conversation with the developers**

- Discussions focused on two tracks for data sharing – 1) existing data, and 2) future data. Existing data have already been collected and are more difficult to adapt/convert to “new” standards. All agreed that future data will be much easier to share with respect to new standards/formats
  - Sharing existing data will be easier if the INSPIRE/NROC project team can do any downsampling/conversions
  - INSPIRE/NROC project team needs to describe desired format(s) and resolution(s) so that new data can be delivered accordingly
- Data is shareable once a COP is complete and sufficient/NOI stage

- Requested data would not compromise propriety information, interfere with the development process, or be made available to stakeholders prematurely
- Consider a public license agreement, which would satisfy some concerns from companies’ legal/management teams

**Highlights from conversation with the agencies**

- The pilot project workflow is adjacent to, but not a part of, regulatory processes
- Like other ocean use and resource datasets on the Portal, regional habitat products provide context and a starting point for additional analyses or data collection that would be required as part of an individual project/action
- The three project outputs will help compare across projects and regionally, provide context for impact assessment and monitoring, and be used to inform communication with the public

**Sample Seafloor Data Request**

The following datasets are requested to serve as “building blocks” of regional habitat products that would address management/regulatory questions of interest and be continually updated as new data are collected and received. The request would also include metadata/reports associated with each variable. Each dataset would be integrated and down-sampled into regional-scale data products. Vertical datum and horizontal coordinate system of received datasets will be converted to a common framework by the INSPIRE/NROC project team.

The desired resolution of the multibeam data is set to be compatible with the finest resolution of the [NOAA National Bathymetric Source](#). The requested data do not include side scan sonar backscatter, archaeological targets, or UXO targets.

<b>Seafloor variable(s)</b>	<b>Type/format</b>	<b>Desired resolution</b>
Multibeam bathymetry and backscatter	Raster/tiff	4m
Boulder fields and/or picks (identification of boulder locations)	Vector-points/polygons ESRI shapefile	N/A
Seabed interpretation – CMECS Substrate Group, Subgroup	Vector-points/polygons/ESRI shapefile	N/A
Seabed interpretation – Shell substrate	Vector-points/polygons/ESRI shapefile	N/A
Seabed interpretation – Bedforms	Vector-polygons/ESRI shapefile	N/A
Seabed interpretation – CMECS Biotic Subclass	Vector-points/ESRI shapefile	N/A