

## THE WATCH (from page 2)

I participated on a panel that addressed the fish species and the fishing communities that would be impacted by four lease areas in federal waters off Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York. The panel was comprised of five commercial fishermen and/or industry representatives and one recreational fishing representative.



**Scientists, fishermen and fish managers meet with BOEM to discuss wind farms and their impact on fish and fishing communities**

two other southeast lease areas held by Bay State Wind, LLC and Offshore MW, LLC.

### We all need to stay informed

The recreational fishing community should become more engaged with windfarm development as turbines are being built in some of our most fertile fishing grounds. **Capt. Rick Bellavance**, president of the Rhode Island Party and Charter Boat Association (RIPCBA), said, “Cox’s Ledge is like a mini George’s Bank to fishermen. Recreational anglers target ground fish such as cod, tautog, and black sea bass there but bluefin tuna (both school and giants), yellowfin tuna and sharks are also often fished there.”

Most of the species fished by recreational anglers have not been surveyed in the Cox Ledge area. The point was made that trawl surveys are not enough. Due to some of the terrain on Cox Ledge other survey methods should be employed, possibly rod and reel surveys, traps or gillnets.

The wind farms present challenges for some because we just do not know how multiple wind farm towers in these areas will impact the fish and fishing communities. But for now, here are some comments from the UMass Dartmouth workshop that

caught my attention.

**Anna Malek Mercer**, of the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation in Rhode Island said, “A study we completed recently showed that the industry feels that three years of baseline data are needed before we start to build these wind farms.” Many at the conference suggested as much as seven years of baseline data was needed, the federal fisheries requirement for many species managed federally.

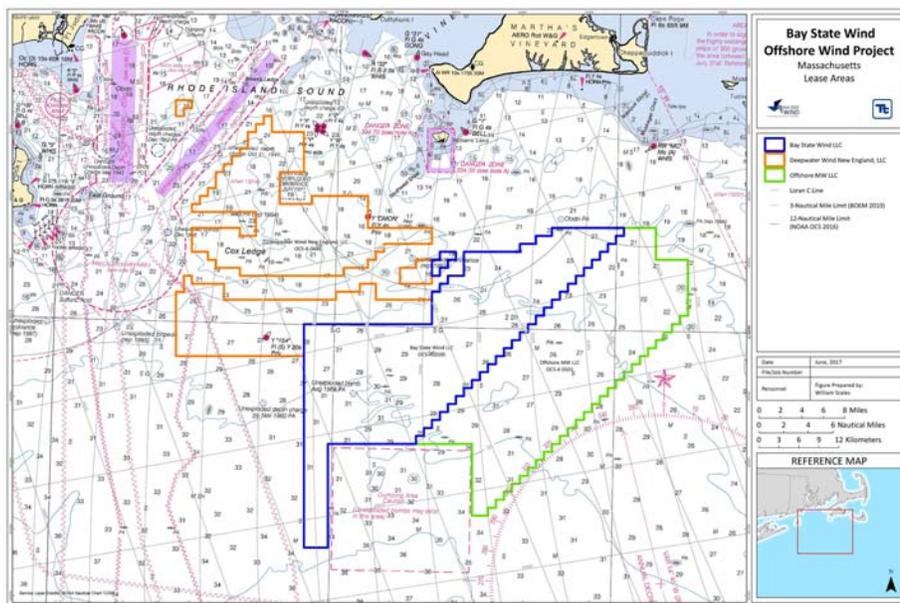
**Vincent Guida**, a NOAA scientist who studied four species that live in the wind farm lease area said, “Cox Ledge has gravel and rock on parts of its bottom.” This suggests we should explore using other methods to survey in addition to trawl surveys.

“Our vessels can’t fish in a windfarm array. Some of our larger vessels have a trawl tow that extends as much as a half mile. Our captains are already trying to avoid areas that can snag nets on wrecks, natural structure and if they have to negotiate wind farm pylons and bases and submarine cable concrete caps they won’t be able to fish without losing gear. A large net can cost as much as \$50,000 to replace.” said **Meghan Lapp** of Seafreeze Ltd, North Kingstown, RI.

“We spent a lot of time locating the Block Island wind farm. We started in 2008 with the Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) and the wind farm was not operational until 2016... The farther you go offshore, the greater the wind, however, add geology and fishery factors into the equation and the sweet spot for the Block Island wind farm was about three miles off the south/southeast side of the Island where the wind farm is

located. The new proposed sites can utilize the same model we just have to put in predetermined criteria.” said **Malcom Spaulding** of the University of Rhode Island.

**Mike Cohen** who manages the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organizations and the Holderness Fishing Cooperative in the United Kingdom (where ocean wind farms have been developed for years now), said, “You are in a good position here in the United



**Wind farm leases off Rhode Island and Massachusetts**

States to impact wind projects with baseline data before they are built. I heard as much as three to seven years of data. We had no baseline data to speak of in the UK. Just one year of a study done on one of our many projects. We are envious of you. You are trying to plan the right way.”

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