RISAA Seminar Gave Members More Insight Into Planned Windfarms

by
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The RISAA monthly meeting on November 26 featured an informational panel presentation from representatives of the three companies who currently hold leases from the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to develop new wind farms off the coast of Rode Island and Massachusetts.

The company representatives that attended were:

• **Capt. John O'Keefe**, Deepwater Wind Manager of Operations and Maintenance for the Block Island Wind Farm and Marine Affairs for Deepwater Wind;

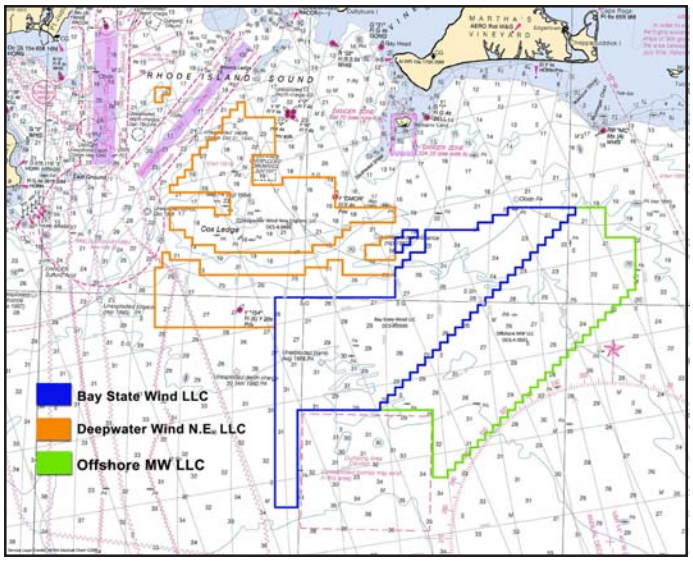
• **Laura Morse**, Bay State Wind Environmental Manager and Whale Biologist

• **Christa Bank**, Vineyard Wind Fishery Liaison.

Each representative first gave a brief description of their project. Then all three provided answers to many questions.

Some questions were submitted prior to the seminar by RISAA members, and these were asked by Rich Hittinger, moderator of the panel, followed by questions from the audience.

During the evening we learned many things about the proposed wind farms including the following:



• Leases issued by BOEM in the past plus another round scheduled for December 2018 are expected to create more than 500 wind turbines in an area extending from the west side of Cox Ledge, approximately 40 miles to the east and roughly 20 miles to the south.

• Construction will be phased over many years, likely starting in 2020 and continuing for at least 10 years.

• Most of the new platforms are planned to be **on "mono-piles" rather than the 4-legged platform** type that was used at the Block Island Wind Farm. This construction method seems to be preferred because it is faster and cheaper to install. Recreational fishermen don't like it as well because it does not produce as much structure for fish habitat and there is more temporary submarine impacts due to more aggressive pounding necessary during installation.

• Developers said they would be happy to get input from RISAA regarding how they could best use "anti-scour pad" rocks at the base of the platforms to enhance fish habitat.

• No recreational fishing studies have been done in the area of these proposed new wind farms up to this point including none for the EIS which is now out for public comment (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/12/07/2018-26573/notice-of-availability-of-a-draft-environmental-impact-statement-for-vineyard-wind-llcs-proposed [federalregister.gov]) even though design is well underway and construction is planned within the next 2 years.

• Developers said they welcome input from RISAA on how to do recreational fishing studies before, during, and after construction of each stage of the wind farm development.

• The entire systems, turbines, platforms, and transmission wires are only scheduled for 20 years of operation and the developers have to have a plan for decommissioning after 20 years. When nearing 20 years developers may request that turbines be replaced, but platforms and wires remain if still in good condition, but that would require approval at that time. Members indicated that they would prefer leaving some structure in the water.

• Although it is possible that transmission cables may require repairs during the 20-year life of the system, it is not likely since they are buried beneath the sea floor. If repair is necessary the area requiring repair will be identified and only that area will be disturbed to. Preform whatever repair in required.

• There is no scientific basis for claims that the metal bases will warm the oceans and in fact the reason behind wind power is to reduce the burning of fossil fuels, thereby reducing man's contribution to warming.

• There will be some oil and hazardous chemicals used during the construction and operation of these projects, however strict procedures will be in place (reviewed by environmental regulatory agencies) to prevent accidental or intentional release of any oil or hazardous materials to the environment.

Overall it was a very interesting evening with the biggest complaint being that we didn't have enough time to ask all of the questions that audience members had. Panel members stayed after the formal presentation to talk with interested RISAA members.