



# RHODE ISLAND **SALTWATER** **ANGLERS** Association



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## **Offshore Wind Farm Recreational Fishing Research Protocol Considerations**

Prepared by the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association

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The Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association's (RISAA) Board of Directors would like to thank Bay State Wind, Deepwater Wind/Orsted and Vineyard Wind for attending our November 26, 2018 seminar and answering many questions from our members.

As we have stated to you in the past, we are in favor of responsible development of offshore wind energy resources **as long as the environment and marine opportunities, including recreational fishing are protected.** We would like to take this opportunity to provide the feedback that you requested on two topics:

- 1. Input regarding proper sampling before, during, and after construction to give an idea of likely impacts to recreational fishing.**
- 2. Input regarding how the tower foundations or anti-scour pads beneath them can be constructed to improve fish habitat.**

Regarding #1 above, we would be pleased to work with you or your scientific consultant to help design the details of a sampling program, but we believe that actual field sampling should be started at least 24 months before any construction. Sampling should include rod and reel surveys of bottom fish and pelagic species during spring, summer, and fall periods as well as bottom fishing in rocky areas during winter months.

This sampling should occur in each construction area for at least one year prior (three or four seasons); during the construction period; and for at least two years post construction. A report should be generated that describes sampling methods, results, and interpretation regarding what effects were observed. A follow-up report should be written to evaluate potential mitigation that could be implemented in subsequent construction areas as development continues. Study methods for pelagic fish such as mahi, tuna, sharks as well as mammals should also occur as part of the study protocol. Methods may include aerial surveys, acoustic tagging and other methods to be determined.

### ***Recreational Fishing Research Protocol Considerations***

In addition, observational studies should be conducted to observe recreational fishing activities occurring in the construction area on a similar schedule. This information should be included in the report mentioned above. An additional aspect of research should include surveying individuals who fish in this area by phone, email, and in-person interviews to determine how their activities in the study area are changing before, during, and after construction. RISAA can help with coordination between these individuals and the researchers.

Regarding #2 above, we believe that the four-legged structures with cross supports used at the Block Island Wind Farm provide better habitat than mono-pile structures and we would prefer seeing that technology used to provide this additional habitat. If mono-pile structures are used we believe that additional structure can be beneficial as habitat and also beneficial to the structures as anti-scour pads. When anti-scour pads are designed the habitat value should be considered.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) has many references to artificial reefs and what makes them productive. They indicate that hard structure rising above the floor of the ocean provides surfaces for encrusting organisms and actual relief provides locations for fish to gain shelter. They recommend hard surfaces like stone, concrete or metal and actual three dimensional spaces like reef balls, concrete pipe sections, caves, etc. Based on this we believe that large rock placed at the base of the tower structures with gaps and voids will provide the best enhanced fish habitat.

It is our goal to have the offshore wind farm industry and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) develop and implement an offshore wind farm recreational fishing research plan/protocol for each offshore wind farm project. As the largest recreational fishing association in the Northeast, RISAA is willing to act as a catalyst to help industry develop and roll out such a protocol throughout the northeast.

We welcome further discussion at any time.

Please contact:

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